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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS.



BY WILLIAM CUTTON, M. A.
Pastor of the United Church of Cambridge

LONDON:
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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS.

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12. B. 7. 9

S I X T E E N
S E R M O N S
On the following
S U B J E C T S.

- | | |
|--|--|
| I. A call to repentance.
II. A warning to young people.
III. Of faith without works.
IV. How christians live by faith.
V. How we are saved by grace.
VI. The condemnation of men is their love of darkness.
VII. Christians must forsake all that they have.
VIII. Esau, or the cunning-hunters.
IX. Of the sin of covetousness.
X. The christian's pattern ; | or, the necessity of meekness and humility.
XI. Of the care of the soul.
XII. The benefit of an early exercise.
XIII. Of eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ.
XIV. The practical knowledge of God.
XV. The practical consideration of God's Providence.
XVI. The character of those who are scoffers at religion ; their folly and danger. |
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WITH
A PREFACE concerning The Whole Duty
of Man.

3 L

By WILLIAM SUTTON, M. A.
Rector of St. Michael Carhaies, in Cornwall.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. STRAHAN, for the AUTHOR ;
And Sold by C. HITCH and L. HAWES, in Pater-
Noster-Row. MDCCCLIV.

14

SERMONS

SUBJECTS



- I. A call to repentance.
II. A warning to those who are careless.
III. Of the nature of the Christian's warfare.
IV. How to overcome the world.
V. How to be holy.
VI. The commandment of love.
VII. Christian conduct.
VIII. The Christian's duty to his neighbor.
IX. Of the sin of covetousness.
X. The Christian's duty to his country.

WITH
A PREFACE concerning The Whole Duty
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MDCCLXV.

P R E F A C E

C O N C E R N I N G

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

THAT conscience, which *St. Paul* observes to be natural to the Gentiles, who have no other law, must be very much improved, and have greater influence on people, who live under the light of revelation. *Life and immortality are brought to light*; the laws of God proposed to our observation, under the severest sanctions; and most dreadful punishments threatned to the disobedient: so that 'tis hardly possible that any one among christians, should live entirely free from religious fears.

Now, as long as these fears are under the government of reason, and directed by an impartial and diligent attention to the truth; they necessarily lead a man to a sincere repentance and amendment of life.

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But *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*; the many bad examples in a corrupt world, and the want of such as are truly good; have created great difficulties in this affair. For these having great power over the hearts of men, they find it very hard to resist the many temptations of the world; which they must necessarily do, to attain to a state of true religion; and, at the same time, as hard to live without any religion at all, or without some pretences to the pardon and favour of God.

From hence, innumerable deceits have taken place among christians; while they who cannot endure the strictness of their profession, very greedily embrace, and as obstinately adhere to some other things instead of it, which may serve at present, to take off that uneasiness which naturally attends the neglect of duty, and the imperfections of a partial repentance.

Among many other mistakes, there are hardly any of more mischievous consequence than those which people are apt to make concerning that faith by which we are saved, or rather by which we are brought into a state of salvation. When the word *faith* is used for that state,

or

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or the whole of the christian profession; or fidelity in the practice of it; it is indeed justly commendable, and cannot fail of obtaining its end, salvation. But when 'tis transferred to believing without evidence or reason, and stiffly adhering to doubtful opinions, which are called orthodox by particular sects or parties; or to merely believing the most necessary doctrines of christianity, without that holiness of life, which is the end and design of all belief; it is then nothing but delusion, and a snare, into which many voluptuous and worldly men have suffered themselves to be drawn, notwithstanding all the remonstrances of scripture, reason, and common sense, to the contrary.

The reader may perceive by some of the following sermons, that I have had a particular regard to this deceitfulness of sin, in my instructions to those people who are under my care. I was therefore, not a little grieved at the appearance of a book, entitled, *The New Whole Duty of Man*; which, although it has passed through six editions, is but lately come to my hands.

By the title page, I feared, that, whatsoever the intention of it was, besides the Bookseller's gains, I should find it, as I

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have indeed, more likely to set people upon believing and disputing (which they are already too apt to do) than to promote the true fear of God, and keeping his commandments, which is now, and ever was, The whole duty of man.

But, to make way for this new performance, an old Treatise, which for many years past has been deservedly called, The Whole Duty of Man, is to be cried down, and the use of it set aside as unprofitable. This has been attempted, in a manner fallacious and unfair; and if it has succeeded (as it very well may, with ignorant or unwary people, who are fond of new things) I think, it ought to do a great deal of good in the nation, before it can make amends for the mischief it has done in that particular.

That old book has been almost universally approved, as containing all things which are necessary to answer its design, in being a short and plain direction to the very meanest readers; and if it has any faults (as all human things are liable to imperfection) yet it is, in my opinion, the most unexceptionable that ever I saw; and, I believe, a better family-piece is not to be expected, if at all to be had.

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But this excellent book is charged with two faults ; it is said to be old, and not fitted for the present times ; and to want those articles of the christian faith, which are *essentially* necessary to salvation.

For the first of these, we are referred to Dr. Hammond's letter ; which indeed, proves it to have been published near a hundred years ago. But if antiquity alone be admitted as an argument against it, the same will lie much harder upon many other good books, not excepting the scriptures themselves. It was not for this new author's advantage, to take notice of any thing in that letter, except the date ; he justly feared, that the following encomium to be found therein, was irrefragable. " The subject matter of it," says Dr. Hammond, " is indeed, what the title undertakes, The *Whole Duty* of Man, set down in all the branches, with those advantages of brevity and partitions, to invite and support, and engage the reader ; that condescension to the meanest capacities, but withal that weight of spiritual arguments, wherein the best proficients will be glad to be assisted, that it seems to me equally fitted for both sorts of readers, &c." He adds indeed, that
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the nation was never more in need of such supplies, than in those times. And I dare say, that if he was now alive, he would say the same. For there is nothing in the whole book so peculiar to those, or any other times, as to seem needless or superfluous at present ; nor is any thing wanting to oppose and reform any particular iniquity which is now predominant, if the readers are not wanting to themselves. All the forementioned excellencies of it remain the same ; all the instructions, exhortations and reproofs are still plain and easy ; the language not obsolete, and the style such as may make it still entertaining as well as profitable to every reader who is rightly disposed. And if, as it is said, the generality of readers begin to be little affected with it, the fault is not in the work itself, but in the natural aversion and distaste, which they must have for the subject matter of it.

To confirm the second charge, we have the testimony of a learned and judicious divine. If I am not mistaken in the man, that divine was apt to declaim, and say many things *gratis*, or without proof. He was judicious enough not to pretend to prove what was not to be proved by him
or

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or any one else. But whoever he is, all his learning and judgment will never induce me to take his word against plain matter of fact; and therefore, I assert on the contrary, the author of the *Whole Duty of Man* has not omitted any thing which a christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; notwithstanding this new author is not ashamed to tell us, that the articles of the christian faith are entirely omitted in it.

The book is directed chiefly to people of mean capacities, such as the author knew were not to be received to doubtful disputations; and therefore he did not fill it with many unnecessary disputable points, which were more apt to puzzle than instruct his readers; and induce them to imagine, not without reason, that, if religion consisted in things which were difficult, and to them unintelligible, or above their capacities, they might leave it to the learned, and be excused from troubling their heads about it: and some, I know, have actually excused themselves upon this account.

But it is said, that " we have now ano-
" ther sort of enemies to contend with, whose
" shocking impieties and tenets strike at
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Pag. ii.

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“ the very foundation of christianity itself.” This, I fear, is too true; but, to suppose, that the use of *The whole Duty of Man*, has at all contributed towards it, is nothing but a scandalous insinuation, to serve the purpose of the author of it. I shall very readily accept his reference, and leave it to the judicious part of mankind to determine.

What this new champion for christianity has given us, I think will not much mend the matter. For certainly, nothing more contributes to the advantage of sceptics and deists, than multiplying articles of faith, and adding to those truths, which Christ and his apostles proposed to their hearers, as necessary to become his disciples. Every attentive reader of the New-Testament must find, that these were reasonable, plain and few. But when they are multiplied by human deductions, divisions, and explanations; 'tis hardly possible but that some of them must be false, or, at least, suspected and doubtful; and such as are so, are the best handles for the enemies of our faith to take hold of. And such as these (excepting the pretended authority and dominion of the missionaries over the people's faith and consciences) have

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have given the greatest offence to infidels, and been a great hindrance to the progress of christianity in foreign parts, as well as to that of true christian knowledge among ourselves.

As I do not find any thing omitted in the old book, which is *essentially* necessary to salvation, but that a spirit of christianity runs through the whole; and, as Dr. Hammond says, extends itself very particularly, to all our principal concerns; 'tis strangely surprizing that this new author should call it a moral scheme, Pag. iii. and set it, as he does, in direct opposition to the christian religion. 'Tis plain by this, and other things in his epistle to the readers, that he would insinuate into their minds, that it is a book fitted for deists, and that his own is the only scheme of christianity. But this abuse (as bad as it is) was quite necessary for his purpose. It was necessary to prepare us for the introduction of those many testimonies, which he has cited in favour of his work. These are indeed of great authority; and who would be so bold as to contradict what is attested by the scriptures, the liturgy, articles, homilies, and writings of several learned and pious Bishops? &c. and yet, before we entirely acquiesce in the

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the affair, we may certainly presume to examine what they say.

For my own part, in taking their depositions, I find that they fully determine the point for christianity against deism, or any other infidelity, and that is all. So that, unless our old book is a scheme of deism, and the new one of christianity, which is not to be granted, I see nothing to the purpose; but this great cloud of witnesses is blown off at once, and the reader may see the truth, if he will but open his eyes.

I have neither room nor inclination to examine particularly, all the excellencies of this pompous performance; it may suffice to make some few remarks, which I shall do as briefly as I can; for we need not drink up the sea, to know the saltness of the waters.

In the frontispiece, we are presented with a triangular glory, receiving adoration from some hieroglyphical figures about it. This brought to my remembrance, what I have read in the works of a late

* Mo-
traye, vol.
2. p. 329.

* traveller; who, being among the Laplanders, had the curiosity to enquire into their religion; and asking one of them, what God is? the last answer he could get, was, *They are a triangle*. He supposes it to be

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a comparison, with which some priest had confounded his brain, without enlightening his understanding. I should very much wonder, if it had at all enlightened his understanding, whether it had confounded his brain or no. But, as we are told that images and pictures are the books of the Laity, it is possible that some readers, though not of the meanest capacity, yet not thoroughly understanding those explanations, which divines have given us of the Trinity, may be induced by this means, to worship the God of that Laplander. They will be the more inclined so to do, because they may do it, and yet continue in a state of impenitency : The triangle will give them no disturbance, nor put them out of their way.

Some have dared to represent their God, by the figures of an old man, in company with a young man and a dove. Abominable enough ! and yet these have some pretence for their error from the scriptures. For we there find, that God is called the ancient of days, and that the Holy Ghost did actually appear in shape of a dove; whereas, I do not find that the name of a triangle, or any thing like it, is at all mentioned therein.

We justly abhor, as ridiculous as well as idolatrous, the monstrous shapes of the
Indian

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Indian deities, which they make to themselves, with many and various heads, eyes, hands, &c. but their priests will tell you, that these are only hieroglyphical representations of their attributes. Now 'tis certain that the attributes of God, being plainly revealed both in his word and in his works, are capable of being understood by hieroglyphical figures, as well as by metaphorical words ; but, as for his metaphysical essence, it is not possible to be known, much less represented by human art. *Take*

Deut. iv. 15. *ye therefore good heed;* according to the earnest exhortation of Moses ; for a triangle is certainly a similitude, though not adequate to the purpose, as indeed no similitude can be. But let us proceed to the book itself.

In the 25th page, the doctrine of predestination is rejected as unscriptural, and contrary to our natural notions of the divine attributes. In this, I think, the author is much in the right, and entirely agree with him. But if the articles, which are supposed to be interpretations of the scripture, are to be quoted for good proof, as if they were scripture itself, as this author has done ; I know not what answer we shall make to a Calvinist, if he should object against us the 17th article, in which
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that doctrine stands confessed, in as strong lines, as if it had been done by Calvin himself: And no wonder, for it was written by men of the same opinion with that reformer; and was certainly the avowed doctrine of the church of England, for many years after the Reformation.

Now, if this be true, our author has placed those men, whose writings he produces for argument, among the unskilful interpreters; when he tells us that the doctrine has no foundation in scripture, whatever there may be in the writings of some such. I am aware, that the forementioned article has been explained off, and not a little exposed in some expositions. But there is no end of explaining explanations; and if people are permitted to take the articles in what sense they please, I think they had better been let alone, and we had taken up our rest in the scriptures themselves; but, perhaps, that did not seem so agreeable to ecclesiastical polity. Be that as it will, 'tis certain that ecclesiastical, or antichristian tyranny, which, under the specious name of orthodoxy, has done more mischief than all the mischievous things in the world, could not have been set up, and supported as it is, unless

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some shackles had been put upon the truth.

In page the 52d, we have the following rule of faith; " Every doctrine that is
" there (in scripture) delivered, we must
" believe: but as for any doctrine that
" is not there plainly delivered, nor can
" be clearly deduced from thence; we are
" not bound to believe *that* as an article of Faith, let it come never so well
" recommended." This indeed may be a rule to some people, to whom nothing is obscure; but as it is addressed to people of all capacities, I think it wants some explanation. For many things in scripture, and much more in deductions from it, may be plain to one which are not so to another; and therefore we shall still be at a loss, to know what things are necessary for every one to believe. But this is needless as well as difficult to be known. For as believing does not depend upon the will, but the reason and judgment; all that can be called a man's duty in that respect, is the love of truth, and a sincere and diligent enquiry after it. There are many things in scripture, which may be profitable, more or less, for edification, and yet not *essentially* necessary; and therefore
fore

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fore I think it would have been a better rule for christians in general, to have told them, they must study the will of God, and do their best endeavours to know what He would have them believe and do.

He that does thus much, will not fail, in a protestant country, to have enough in his creed, to induce him to lead a holy life ; and if he takes the best care he can, that his practice may keep pace with his knowledge, he may look upon other things, which are out of his reach, as things which will not be required of him.

Now, if there are many men of mean capacities and abilities, who notwithstanding that, may be heirs of salvation, we may conclude that those articles which are *essentially* necessary for that purpose, must not be many nor difficult. But if all which this author, and many others of the like sort, have advanced as such, are really so, and inseparable from that catholic faith, without which a man cannot be saved, the christian world is then in very bad case ; not only they, who are so ignorant as not to understand the athanasian creed, but many of the wisest and best proficients, without doubt shall perish everlastingly.

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Pag. xvii.

Here I expect to be answered, that, in order to believing, it is not necessary that we should understand. For we are told, that there are some things which we must believe, or assent to the truth of them, though they are such as our reason and understanding cannot fathom; because they are revealed by God, who cannot lie, and whose knowledge is infallible.

Such things as these may be contained in scripture, as far as I know; but how they can be revealed I know not, neither did St. Paul, as I shall shew by and by. For, if we lay aside our reason, we are immediately in the state of brutes, altogether incapable of any revelation at all. And, if God himself should vouchsafe to speak to us face to face, as he did to Moses, he must apply to our understanding and reason, or impart to us some other faculties, which, as yet, he has not done; or else we shall have nothing to believe but his veracity in general, which no christian ever dares to deny. When the forementioned apostle came from paradise, he did not attempt to reveal what he had there heard, because he knew it was not to be done. It was something *not possible to be uttered*, or made known by any words, to
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our present understanding. If he had thought fit, he might have given us a system of theological school terms, unintelligible, though not unspeakable; which might have served the purpose of some polemical Divines, or synodical creed-makers, and put us upon disputing, and cursing, and railing at one another, and cutting one another's throats; which has always been, and ever will be, the natural product of unintelligible creeds.

But St. Paul was of a better mind; he knew that his business was to instruct us in things necessary, and therefore easy to be understood; and not puzzle and divide us, and give occasion for those things which he himself reckons among the works of the flesh. And if all his pretended successors had had as much wisdom, and charity, and as little worldly ambition, the christian world might have escaped all that wrath, strife, persecutions and antichristian cruelties, which it has laboured under, and which has been the bane of our holy profession.

To speak of these things at large, is more fit for a volume than a preface; which, I fear, is too long already. I must therefore beg the reader's patience, while

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while I make one more remark only, before I make an end.

In the old book, the duty of the people towards their pastors, the authority of the one, and submission of the other, are certainly carried to a very high degree, and something, I fear, beyond the truth. But our new author could not be contented without some new addition, whereby he
Pag. 184. might out-bid the former. "We must
"obey" (says he) "our spiritual govern-
"nors, not only in whatsoever they, out
"of scripture declare to us, to be God's
"commands,—but likewise in submitting
"to that discipline they shall inflict, either
"to recover us from a state of folly, or
"to preserve us from falling into such a
"state; from a pure sense of that right
"they have to command, intrusted to
"them by our Saviour Jesus Christ," &c.
A right to command, is very taking with many people; especially such as are most unwilling to obey, and most difficult to be governed. But I cannot any where find that any such right is intrusted to us by Jesus Christ: neither has the author given us sufficient directions for that purpose. Perhaps, he has found it among the new discoveries of the forementioned divine, or
6 some

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some other of the same peculiar learning and judgment. It seems indeed to me, to favour more of a popish emissary than a protestant writer. For I see no difference between submitting to discipline inflicted, and doing penance, in obedience to the priest; for the practice of which, auricular confession also must be a necessary consequence. Such doctrine indeed is not very likely to prevail in this nation, nor any where else, where there are no more coercive sanctions, to enforce it, besides that *pure sense* of the clergy's right to command; which the people do not seem at all to have.

Nevertheless (as all errors in doctrine are more or less mischievous) it may be a snare to the consciences of some weak people, who have more piety and zeal than true christian knowledge and judgment. But, if this writer has any desires or hopes of introducing among us a *blessed Hierarchy*, let him and all they who are of the same mind, consider how well they are prepared to submit to, or endure a *Holy office*.

In short; I find little or nothing good throughout his whole work, but what is taken from the old book, or some other
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modern divines; but so put together, and delivered in such a manner, that he has made it all his own, and justly given it the title of the *new* whole duty of man. But, that it is made easy either in matter or style, as it pretends, I utterly deny.

In the following sermons, some observations will be found to occur more than once; for which I must beg the reader's excuse. They were written at different times, without the least thought that they would ever appear together in public. Those observations are such as I judged to be of great importance, or concerning things, in which people are most apt to mistake. In other respects, I have endeavoured, as much as I could, without being obscure, to avoid tediousness and prolixity.

A CALL to REPENTANCE.

HEB. iv. 7.

*To day if you will bear his voice, harden not
your hearts.*

THESE Words are taken from the SERM.
ninety-fifth Psalm, and applied by I.

St. Paul in this and the foregoing chapter, to the times of the gospel; and thus are a warning to all people, not to reject the call of God, or his offers of repentance through Jesus Christ.

The epistle being directed to the Hebrews, or Jews converted to christianity, the apostle puts them in mind of the example of their forefathers, who for their obstinacy and disobedience, died in the wilderness, and did not enter into that rest which was promised to the people of God. And as that rest in the land of Canaan, was a type or signification of the eternal sabbath in heaven, promised to all faithful christians; the example of them whose carcases fell in the wilderness, is a

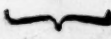
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very

SERM. very proper warning to us also; and de-

I. serves to be considered with great earnestness, as it denotes the certainty of God's purposes; that, if men will persist in their unbelief or disobedience, He will, notwithstanding their vain hopes of escaping, exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, to an everlasting death, as sure as He did the children of Israel from the promised land, to a temporal.

This is a subject which has been frequently handled, but has not had that success which might be expected from the importance of the affair, and those weighty arguments which have been offered and urged to the common sense and reason of mankind. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the love of other things, are instant, and press hard upon men's affections; and so take up and employ their thoughts, as to suspend at least, if not wholly turn away their attention from the voice of God in the Gospel. As long therefore as these prejudices last, and men have so strong a bias or inclination towards them, these warnings and exhortations to repentance can never be too frequent or unseasonable: and 'tis to be hoped that there are some few at least who

who have so much wisdom, and care for SERM.
their own eternal happiness, as not to be I.
deaf to the Apostle, when with so much 
earnestness, and with a repeated voice, he
cries aloud, *To day*, if you will hear his
voice, Harden not your hearts.

This is the voice of the heavenly crier ;
and it contains, first, A duty, which is, to
hear the voice of God, or rather to obey
it, as the word generally signifies in scrip-
ture, and therefore they who hear and do
not obey, are there said, In hearing to
hear not. And this will be no small aggra-
vation of guilt and self condemnation, at
the last day, That men have ears, and
hear not, *i. e.* Are endued with under-
standing and reason, and yet will not
make a proper use of it for their own sal-
vation.

Secondly, We have the time when this
duty is to be done, *viz. To day*, or the time
present, as it stands distinguished from *To*
morrow, which never is, nor can be so.
And if no other reason could be given for
doing this duty to day, yet the word of
God would be abundantly sufficient, if men
were wise enough to acquiesce in his direc-
tions. For this is not to be considered
merely as an arbitrary command, but God

SERM. himself calls it his counsel or advice ; *Ye*

I. *have set at nought all my counsel:* and
 Prov. i. 25. this counsel He gives us, because, weighing
 all things with a perfect infallible judgment, He knows 'tis the best and only way
 to secure our happiness. And therefore, how inconceivably foolish must it be, as
 well as presumptuous, for men to imagine, that they can safely put by this counsel of
 infinite wisdom, and substitute in the place of it, a cunning device of their own, as
 more fit for their purpose! Unless man can be thought wiser for himself than his
 Maker, they must certainly be deceived, and perish in their folly: So it is written
 of them; *They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own
 devices. Prov. i. 31.*

Thirdly; Here is a prohibition, forbidding us to harden our hearts; which is too well known to be the consequence of not hearing his voice *to day*. This work of repentance will not be more easy, as some imagine, at another time, but more difficult, for several reasons; and still grow more and more difficult and unlikely to be done at all, the longer it is deferred. And this the Apostle intimates in the foregoing chapter, by a like admonition; *Exhort*
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Heb. iii.
13.

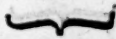
13.

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SERM. tures, He chose rather to contrive a method

I. of salvation for us; to try us with a new covenant, and to accept of such a service as we are able to perform: That instead of a perfect innocence and obedience, we might render him a sincere repentance and amendment of life. And that we might be fully instructed in these things, He sent his son Jesus Christ, not only to make known his Will, but to dye for us, and be a propitiation for our sins; thereby assuring us of his readiness to forgive what is past, and to assist and accept our future obedience, if we are truly desirous of his favour, and will sincerely resolve to forsake all wickedness in order to obtain it.

This is agreeable to the character of
 Mala. iii. Christ, who was to fit as a refiner and puri-
 3. fier of silver; to purge away sin like dross, or
 destroy it as being the works of the Devil:
 to bless us, not in our sins, which is impos-
 sible; but in turning away every one of us
 Acts iii. from his iniquities. Every doctrine there-
 26. fore, and every imagination of man's heart,
 which gives encouragement, either to com-
 mit sin, or to continue longer in a state of
 it, must be very false and delusive, as it is
 directly contrary to the intent of the Gos-
 pel, and to the nature of God, as well as
 his

his revealed Will.——And moreover; That SERM.
to renounce the devil and all his works, the I.
poms and vanities of the wicked world, 
and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; to at-
tend to and believe what God has revealed,
and to persevere in his commandments all
the days of our life; That these things, I
say, are necessary conditions of our being
reconciled to God, and inheritors of the
Kingdom of Heaven, is, what every child
capable of being instructed in his Catechism
should know; much more might those
men and women be well acquainted with
these truths, who have had opportunities
of learning from their youth up, if they
did but make use of them, and were truly
disposed to accept this grace or favour of
God.

But so great is the deceitfulness of sin,
and so prevailing are the customs of a
wicked world; that people are rather jea-
lous of any truths in religion (though
never so plain) which are not reconcileable
to the way they are in, or the things which
they are fond of, and care not to forsake.
Their study therefore, if they have any at
all about it, is not sincerely to know their
Duty, but to reconcile what they cannot
help knowing, to their own practice; so
B 4 that

SERM. that instead of being edified thereby, they

I. are carried on to more and more blindness,
and hardness of heart. Else how comes it
to pass that among so many, who resolve to
repent (which, I believe, all Christians do,
one time or other) so few do it in earnest, and
the greater part are so far from it, that they
lose the true notion of what it is, or else
never attain unto it? For even among those,
who would persuade themselves and others,
that they are sincere Christians, it is no
uncommon thing, to hear some, instead
of renouncing the wicked world, plead in
excuse, the wicked customs of the world,
and worldly advantages for downright
disobedience to the Gospel: Instead of
believing all the articles of the Christian
faith, they believe any thing besides; any
absurdity or superstitious fable, that men
have confidence to impose upon them;
provided it does not engage them to amend-
ment of life; and yet, that is the only
Good in religion, which any belief at all
can do. And in consequence of these
things, we have, instead of persevering
in God's holy Will and commandments
all the days of their life, I know not what
mixture of outward shew, partial obedience
and hypocrisy; pretended piety and holi-
ness

ness one day, and allowed impiety and SERM. immorality another : as if the robe of I. righteousness might be put off and on for conveniency, like bodily apparel.

This hypocrisy is very manifest in those who neglect the sacrament of the Lord's supper, that they may with the greater freedom, attend a feast or other diversion or business, in which they are conscious that they are not likely to behave themselves as christians ought to do ; hoping to extenuate the guilt of their Sin, by neglect of their duty, and casting off the obligations of it for a season. But if a thousand years be with God as one day, no distance of time can alter the case ; and therefore he that would receive any benefit of his religion, must be one and the same man (at least, in his design) at all times ; and if he thinks it a sin to be drunk, or otherwise immoral, at the time of a Sacrament, he will not be less guilty, if he puts it off to a week or a month after ; but he will be more guilty, if he puts off the Sacrament for that purpose, because by that means, he owns that he is about to run himself designedly into temptation, or to do something, which he knows is not agreeable to his christian profession : the sin of which, must

SERM. must be very presumptuous, if there was

I. no other evil in it, than a needless and
 wilful neglect of Duty. Not only Sacra-
 ments, but all holy ordinances require in-
 deed a mind free from worldly affairs, and
 seriously intent upon the business in hand,
 during the solemnity; but virtue and holi-
 ness, or rather an improvement therein,
 (which is the end and design of all duties)
 is required all the days of a man's life; his
 religion will otherwise be only hypocrisy
 and deceit.

But these wild notions of serving God,
 people learn, not so much by misunder-
 standing the Scriptures, as from one ano-
 ther, and their own evil inclinations; by
 which they are easily persuaded to things
 which they do not care to examine more
 perfectly. And by this means, iniquity
 abounds, and is supported by hypocrisy;
 so that repentance is made to consist in a
 little superficial sorrow, or some melancholy
 reflections, when business or pleasure will
 no longer divert; sometimes in nothing
 but a sorrowful sigh, or ejaculation; and
 even those stings of conscience in very
 wicked men, which should lead them to
 repentance, are often taken for repentance
 itself, and on the strength of it, they as-
 sume

sume to themselves the hopes of God's pardon, although it is nothing else but a fore-
taste and earnest of their punishment. SERM. I.

Now from this same deceitfulness of sin, by which men are led into these mistakes about the nature of repentance, arises also that particular folly which I proposed to speak of in the second place, *viz.* of imagining that repentance, although it be reasonable and necessary at one time or other, may yet, with safety, or little hazard, be deferred to any other time than the present, or *To day*.

And first; let us consider, that repentance was not primarily offered or intended for men merely obstinate and wicked; but for such as were so for want of proper light and instruction, as well as motives to be otherwise. People may now indeed be wicked through ignorance, and are so for the most part: but they have now no excuse. For we read that the Jews, whose revelations were not so clear, nor their promises so great as ours, were as blameable for their ignorance, as for any other of their vices; because they did not make use of the instructions they had. 'Twas the ignorance of the Heathens, which God is said to have winked at; but now he commands

SERM. commands all men every where to repent.

I. And accordingly the forerunner of Christ
 Afts xvii. 30. preached saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand; i. e. the times*

Matt. iii. 2. of light and truth, righteousness and holiness, in which that kingdom consists. And

now also, says he, the Ax is laid to the root of the trees; The light of the Gospel will try all men, and make manifest who are wicked through unavoidable ignorance, and who are so by choice and obstinacy; and will acquit or condemn them accordingly. And in consequence of this Trial, at the Apostle's preaching, *the Lord added to the Church daily, such as should be saved.* Not such as he had, by a secret decree, ordained to salvation, without their concurrence, but such as were saved, or brought into a state of salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. These were qualified for repentance, and therefore, did not put it off for a single day, but embraced the doctrine of the Gospel gladly as soon as they heard it; while the rest were so far from it, that they persecuted the preachers themselves. There is now also the same difference between the good and bad; Christians in reality are as much distinguished from Christians in name and profession, as believers from

from unbelievers : And he who is now as- SERM.
fured that God will be reconciled to him I.
upon his repentance, and yet is so much ~~~~~
in love with other things, that he will not
repent at present, but prefers the pleasures
of sin before the favour of God, does as
plainly shew that he is not one of a vir-
tuous disposition to be saved, as the unbe-
liever who rejected the doctrine and mira-
cles of the Apostles. He shews that he is
much more obstinate, and farther from the
kingdom of Heaven, as, by promising to
repent another time, he owns the truth of
the Gospel, and the necessity of repentance,
and yet chooseth the ways of sin rather than
righteousness, when he knows the different
consequences with which they are attended.
Being therefore wicked in the midst of so
much light and knowledge, and with such
powerful motives to be otherwise, he must
certainly be excluded from the number of
those, for whom the Grace of Repentance
was primarily intended.

But notwithstanding this; so great is the
goodness and mercy of God, that such as
these, howsoever unworthy, are still called
and invited to return ; and have offers of
pardon whensoever they will please to
change their minds, and amend their lives.

This

SERM. This is that long suffering and forbearance

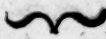
I. of God, which, St. Paul says, leadeth to
 ~~~~~ repentance ; and will certainly have that

Rom. ii.

4.

effect upon every ingenuous or well disposed soul ; although by others 'tis despised, and so perverted as to be made an argument for continuing longer in sin, and heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. Because God is merciful and good, the Sinner thinks he may safely go on to provoke him ; and in opposition to his revealed purposes, with inexpressible folly and shallowness of thought, imagines he has found out a way to mock or cheat the Almighty, by enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, and afterwards reaping the fruits of righteousness, everlasting life.

Now, 'tis very true that God has promised to pardon him at what time soever he will turn from his wicked ways ; but, if he refuses to do it now, there is no promise that he shall do it another time, but 'tis very unlikely that he ever will ; and by being delayed any considerable time, becomes the most unlikely thing possible in the world. He may promise it himself, and without doubt, does it with great assurance ; but with how little reason, God only knows ; the folly of it being too great  
 to

to be easily described. If there was nothing SERM.  
else, this one common observation alone is I.  
sufficient to shew that 'tis very great, and   
much greater than men are guilty of, in  
any other affairs; viz. The shortness and  
uncertainty of man's life. For, if this was  
the case of any man, that he was to do  
some troublesome or ungrateful work, upon  
pain of losing his whole estate or his life;  
and this too before some certain limited  
time, altogether unknown to him, were  
lapsed; I say, if this was his case, would  
not men account him something worse than  
a fool, if he should say, I am indisposed  
at present, I will do it some other time,  
when perhaps to morrow or the next mo-  
ment may be too late?

If then they were hypocrites who could Matt.  
discern the face of the sky, and yet not the xvi. 3.  
signs of the times; how much more are  
they so, as well as the worst of fools, who  
can discern a danger in temporal affairs,  
and yet act as if they could not see the same,  
though altogether as manifest, in a matter  
of the last concern?

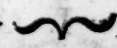
The advantage which the young man  
proposes to himself by this device, is the  
hopes of a double happiness; to enjoy the  
fulfilling of his lusts, and inordinate affec-  
tions

SERM. tions for the present, and afterwards to se-

I. cure his share in the world to come. This  
 (as I have already noted) is endeavouring  
 to mock God; and 'tis further full of  
 weakness and mistake, for these reasons.

First, it is impossible he should repent sincerely, not only as long as he enjoys the pleasures of sin, but as long as he counts them a happiness or advantage; for true penitents do not only desire that sin should be pardoned, but that it should be mortified also, and rooted out.

And secondly; If he should be so happy as to repent in time, he will then be convinced of his error, and find to his cost, that there is no gain or advantage in the ways of sin; but that it proves in the end, somewhat worse than vanity and vexation of spirit. Such a deceitful repentance, as I have already spoken of, will indeed give him but little trouble; but if he repents in earnest, he must pay a severe reckoning for his past follies; such as will fill him with deadly sorrow, doubts and fears, if not with despair: his work will be more difficult according to the time he has put it off; and his strength and virtue more weak, and consequently his hopes and comforts but small. Instead of reaping a  
 double

double happiness, he will have his cup of SERM.  
sorrow doubly filled, for the little pleasure I  
he had ; and happy is he, if that sorrow   
does not come too late.

These being then the difficulties of a  
late repentance, how great must that de-  
ceitfulness of sin be, which can make men  
endued with common sense, so far divest  
themselves of it, as to propose the delay-  
ing of their repentance to the time of  
death ! to amend their lives, when their  
lives are at an end ; and hope that the ba-  
lance should then turn on their side, when  
the *Tekel Upharfin* appears upon the wall ! Dan. v.

And yet the Scripture itself is brought  
to support this folly, by the example of the Luke  
thief upon the cross ; with which, 'tis well xxiii. 43.  
known, these dilatory sinners can flatter  
themselves. And to answer in short, (if it  
can need any answer) I say, if the case of  
that thief was just the same as they imagine,  
it could be but a very slender or broken  
reed to depend upon for salvation. For  
there is a great difference between a thief  
penitent, and one who wilfully persists in  
his purposes, to steal from God, what He  
never promised, but has denied. But the  
case is very different ; it being evident  
by this man's acquaintance with Christ,  
C and



SERM. and declaring that he had done nothing

I. amiss; and by the rest of his behavior, that he was a Christian well instructed, and did not begin, but end his repentance, and shew the sincerity of it, at that time. Nor is it possible that this or any other Scripture should countenance so senseless a hope, as that of a death-bed repentance.

Thirdly, The danger or rather certain destruction of such sinners, will be more evident, if we consider, that by putting off their repentance, from time to time, and thus trifling with God and their Souls, they must of necessity, harden their own hearts, although they resolve to themselves that they will not.

This is found so true in fact, and customary sinners are usually hardened to such a degree, that some have unwarily imputed it to the immediate irresistible act of God upon the Soul; it being also undeniable that He is said in scripture, to harden men's hearts. But we must observe, that there is nothing can be done, but the supreme Cause of all things may, in some sense or other, be said to do it; although the act be a thing which he abhors, and what none but wicked men or wicked spirits will do. Thus, in the second book  
of

of Samuel, God is said to have moved or SERM.  
tempted David to number the People; I.

which, being an evil act, we must, notwithstanding what is there said, by no means think God to be the doer of it. Chap. xxiv. 1.

For we are plainly told by his Apostle, that Jam. i. 13.

*He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.* And accordingly,

by the same history, as it is read in the first book of Chronicles, we find in express terms, that Satan did this very thing; Chap. xxi. 1.

God only permitting it, when David was too much inclined to have it so.

Moreover, 'tis God who has ordered the course of nature, and makes every thing produce its proper effects: and therefore, He is said to harden men's hearts, as he has made hardness of heart the natural consequence of obstinacy in sin. In

this sense, the prophet Habakkuk says, Chap. ii. 13.

*It is from the Lord that the people weary themselves for very vanity;* not that it was

his Will, much less his act, that they should seek vanity, or weary themselves;

but on the contrary, it was He who made weariness inseparable from the pursuit of

vanity, that he might discourage them from it. Therefore, as no man when he

is tempted, must say, I am tempted of

SERM. God; so no man should say, I am har-

I. dened of God; for he is so far from doing it, that he will not suffer it to be done, as long as it can be prevented by any thing which is not inconsistent, or unfit to be done with men in a state of moral pro-

Lai. v. 4. bation, or trial of their Virtue: There is nothing can be done in God's vineyard, which he will not do, to hinder it from bringing forth wild Grapes. Nor can Satan himself, although never so desirous, prevail any further than men will consent: He may help it forward, by suggesting evil thoughts, and imaginary happiness in sin; and God may permit it when 'tis fit he should no further interpose; but the immediate act is still a man's own, and what he chooses for himself. And I believe there is hardly one living, though never so much hardened, who would not reject the most alluring temptation, if he was sure to die immediately for consenting to it; and therefore, when men are about to sin, they might do otherwise, if they would; and before they are hardened, very easily too, with small reluctancy or self-denial. But in short, the case is, this; As it is the nature of poison to kill, so 'tis the nature of Sin to harden men's hearts; and who-  
soever

foever will venture upon either of these, SERM.  
must expect the certain consequences of I.  
one as well as of the other; and if it  
be madness for a man to say: I will  
indulge myself in every thing that is un-  
wholsome, and destructive to my con-  
stitution, and yet resolve to be a healthy  
person; it is much more so, to say: I  
will indulge myself in sin, and feed my  
inordinate affections for a season, and  
then be wise, and not suffer these  
things to have the same natural effect  
upon me, as they have upon other  
people.

'Tis well known, that men's manners  
vary, and are very much formed according  
to the company and things they are con-  
versant with, even when those things are in-  
different in respect to good and evil. But  
sin has, besides custom, a natural power  
to hold men captive, as it debases and  
weakens the reason, and understanding,  
and at the same time, feeds and strengthens  
the inferior appetites and passions against  
them; and vice and virtue being vastly  
different, the transition or passage from  
one to the other becomes exceeding diffi-  
cult, when vice is grown into a habit:  
so that, in scripture-language, 'tis repre-



SERM. sented by an impossibility, and does literally

I. advance towards it, according as the sinner  
fills up the measure of his iniquity.

Jer. xiii.

23.

The usual and proper means of conversion, are Instructions of the Gospel, the convictions of sin, and the punishment due to it ; calls to repentance, and assured promises of pardon and assistance ; together with men's natural fears, and forebodings of evil : and above all, the animating hopes of an endless felicity.

Heb. vi.

5.

These are called the powers of the world to come, or (as it should be translated) the powers of the Age to come, or the Gospel-Age. But when men have lived from time to time, under the influence of these, and are found proof against them, what further unpromised or unheard of means can be expected, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? They are, by St. Paul, likened to that earth, which often drinketh in the rain, and yet bears nothing but thorns and briars ; and therefore is nigh unto cursing.

Heb. vi.

8.

When the sinner, by long experience, finds this to be the case ; and he grows weary of cheating himself with pretended resolutions of repentance, at such or such

a time; he is then prepared to take shelter in any other delusions of sin, which his own sinful imagination, or bad company and examples suggest unto him. He cannot find in his heart to amend his life, and therefore persuades himself that it is impossible and not necessary; he makes Christ the minister of sin, and excuses himself in scripture-terms—In many things, we offend all; and what man is he that liveth and sinneth not? And accordingly he hopes that all men are as bad or not much better than himself; and those who appear to be otherwise, he judges to be either hypocrites or melancholy people; and with the Devil himself, rejoices to hear of the wickedness of mankind, and is as ready to accuse any pretender to a holy life.

So many, and so dangerous are the delusions of sin, into which men are led, by neglecting their present opportunities of repentance, that St. Paul thought it not safe for Christians to stand alone in their defence against them; but bids us, with great earnestness, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And well, and happy would it be for us all, if

SERM. that was more the custom of Christians

I. than it is; and that people would not, on  
the contrary, as too many do, rather encourage and harden one another in wickedness.

But to conclude; Let no young man, when he sees so many examples of sinners hardened to such a degree, or so settled in their false and deceitful ways, that there appears no likelihood, or hardly any possibility of their conversion; let him not, I say, flatter himself that he shall not arrive to the same desperate condition, as long as he is in the way that leads to it. There is one only means of escaping, which is obedience to the voice of the wisest and best of Counsellors, speaking on this manner; *To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

## A WARNING to YOUNG PEOPLE.

ECCLES. xi. 9.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into Judgment.*

SOME interpreters have supposed that SERM.  
these words are a permission to young II.  
people to enjoy the pleasures of their youth, provided they restrain and regulate themselves, with regard to the Judgment of God upon their actions, and the account they must give to him hereafter. But notwithstanding 'tis true, that such pleasures as are innocent and moderate, and do not interfere with our christian duty, nor engross too much of our time and affections, are proper and even necessary for youth; yet the words here before us, have a very different meaning; and signify rather what young people are apt to do, than

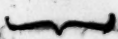


SERM. than what they ought to do ; and what

II. can by no means be permitted by the divine Preacher.

For, to walk in the ways of our heart, and in the sight of our own eyes, is always used in a bad sense, and generally signifies to walk licentiously in the ways of wickedness, without law or restraint. Thus, *Numbers* xv. 39. the Israelites are bid to look upon the commandments of God, that they might not seek after their own heart, and their own eyes. By which, 'tis very plain, that to seek, or to walk after our own hearts and eyes, is opposite to the commandments of God ; and therefore not to be done or suffered by any means.

The words therefore are so far from being a permission, that they reprove the things mentioned in the strongest manner possible, first, by a severe sarcasm, or bitter taunt or jeer, such as men use, when they would threaten most severely, and express their utmost indignation ; and then, by a serious admonition or warning of what the sad consequence will be ; *for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.* In this manner we find the Prophet *Isaiah*, foreseeing what the people would do, threat-

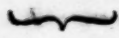
threatening them; *Associate your selves, O SERM.*  
*ye people; and ye shall be broken in pieces; II.*  
*gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in*   
*pieces.* Which words, although in their Chap.  
viii. 9.

direct and proper meaning, they seem to imply a command to the people, to associate themselves, yet 'tis very plain that they are there used to threaten, and more expressly deter them from it, by letting them know, that the consequence of it would be their utter destruction.

So, in this place, we may suppose the Preacher to speak thus: I know, O young men, your vain and wanton disposition; how well your hearts and affections are turned for carnal joy and delight; and how apt you are to follow your own heart's lust, and to pursue what is right in your own eyes; to approve of things as they please and gratify, and not as they are just and holy and good. But I say; do these things if you think fit; do if you dare, after you are assured that the consequence of it, is the just judgment, and wrath of God.

The words being thus understood, imply these two things.—First, what is plainly asserted in the next verse; that youth is vanity, or that young people are subject to  
vanity;

SERM. vanity; apt to follow the shadow of hap-

II.  pinefs, or fuch things as will yield no folid or lafting pleasure, but rather flatter and allure them into great trouble and misery.

Secondly, The certainty of God's judgment upon fuch courfes: *Know thou*, or be thou affured, *that for all thefe things God will bring thee into judgment.*

It is indeed too true, that not only youth, but mankind in general, are fubject to vanity; eagerly purfuing the pleasures or profits of this Life, at the expence of their more durable Riches, and even with the lofs of what, by miftake, they chiefly intend; *viz.* Their own prefent happinefs and peace of mind: And therefore all fuch things as worldly and voluptuous men place their happinefs in, and purfue, are very fitly termed by the Preacher, *Vanity and vexation of Spirit.* And the worft of it is, when men have gone on for fome time, in the fervice of this vanity, they become it's bond-ftaves; nor will the great wearinefs they feel, or the frequent difappointments they meet with, cure them of their folly, or flop them in their mad career: but they drive on, though heavily, after their very power to commit wickednefs, like the chariot-wheels of the  
Egyp-

Egyptians, are struck off; and rather SERM.  
than turn out of their way, they content II.  
themselves with the shadow of former  
things, although those very things them-  
selves were no better than the shadows  
or appearance of happiness. This may  
very properly, and without any tauto-  
logy be called Vanity of Vanities, or the  
Foolishness of Folly. And from hence it  
is, that the Preacher directs his admoni-  
tion in so peculiar a manner to young  
people, well knowing, that there is more  
hopes of their being secured in the right  
way, than of reclaiming old sinners, where  
iniquity has taken such fast hold: and  
moreover, that they are in greater danger  
of being seduced by the vain shew of pre-  
sent happiness, than people who have es-  
caped the snare, or got out of it, in their  
younger years, and are arrived to some  
strength of reason and judgment.

Now, that youth is subject to vanity,  
and that people are most easily drawn  
away at that season of life, is too plain to  
need the wisdom of Solomon to discern;  
'tis evident to the view of all people, and  
young men themselves do not deny it, al-  
though they are not so easily convinced of  
the reason of it in themselves, nor per-  
suaded



SERM. suaded to apply the remedies which are

II. proper for it.

~~~~~ Now the reasons of it are chiefly these.

First, the inferior parts of our nature, appetite and passions, which God appointed to be subject to the superior faculty of reason, or conscience, are in youth, most strong and apt to be predominant. The strength of these grows up, and increases together with the man, without any discipline or culture; whereas the other, the understanding and judgment, require all the care and pains we can take for their increase; and the most that is taken, is seldom equal to the need there is of it. So that when this care is neglected to any degree (as God knows, it too often is) that which has a Right to command, is made by force, to obey and be subservient; which, except a stop be timely put to it, must inevitably be the destruction of any subject whatever, whether it be a single person or a body politick. And as this is very often the case in youth, the young man although he has natural sense and understanding enough to discern between good and evil, in common cases at least; although he has a conscience to tell him, upon occasion, that what he is about to do, is wicked and dis-

displeasing to God, yet not being used to SERM.
walk by that light, nor sufficiently ac- II.
quainted with the danger of withdrawing
his attention from it, is drawn away by
the force of temptation, into the snare,
and entangled in his own folly.

Thus Solomon describes the case of the
young man with the harlot. *Prov. vii. 7.*
I discerned among the youths, a young man
void of understanding (not a natural fool
void of common sense, but one who would
not make a right use of what he had)
passing through the street, near her corner, and
he went the way to her house. The conse-
quence of this we have, *ver. 21.* *With*
her much fair speech, she caused him to yield;
with the flattering of her lips she forced him.
He goeth after her straightway, as an ox
goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the
correction of the stocks: Till a dart strike
through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the
snare, and knoweth not that it is for his
life.

But do not young men know these
things? Yes certainly. The most simple
of them have generally sufficient warning,
that the consequence of sin is misery; that
'tis a bait and a snare; and that, in ventur-
ing upon it, they lay their eternal Life at
stake;

SERM. stake ; and some by a liberal education,

II. have the advantage of learning to improve
their minds ; they can reason well upon moral subjects, and state the difference between virtue and vice ; but in the mean time, have not wisdom enough, or are too weak to practise what they know, or to reap any benefit of their own knowledge. And the reason is, because the force of temptation is what they feel ; it promises largely an immediate happiness ; a present supply to the poor and hungry part of Nature ; whereas, the reasoning faculty, if it is at all made use of at such times, can only suggest the speculation of things remote ; and the conscience, although the most difficult of all to pacify, is nothing else but the foreboding of punishment, at a distance they know not when.

Secondly, Another reason is, that overweening conceit which generally arises from the want of experience, joined with a lively and youthful imagination. Young men fancy themselves wise, because they have not lived long enough to smart sufficiently for their folly. But the strength and vigour of youth, supporting them in their way with a supply of health and spirits, will not let them see, much less feel,

feel, how tedious and tasteless, how tire-
some and bitter those things will prove
which at present they rejoice in, as their
wisdom and happiness.

The first exercise of reason, like the natural eyes, is turned to the light, for pleasure rather than any profitable use; and being therefore employed in the pursuit of pleasant things, the imagination represents things, not as they are, but as they themselves would have them to be; and that they are to be followed, not for their real good, but for their entertainment and delight. And hence, as they choose to walk in the imagination of their hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes, or according to their own wisdom, so it appears to them to be wisdom indeed, and a right way; As Solomon says, *every way of a man, even of a fool, is right in his own eyes.*

SERM.
II.
Prov.
xxi. 2.
xii. 15.

As for the wisdom of being religious, they look on it as the Greek Philosophers did upon Christianity, to be no better than foolishness: And that which Solomon adds, of hearkening to counsel, argues a defect in their understanding, which they never yet could see; but their first judgment or opinion of things is thought certainly right, because it is the first, and

Prov.
xii. 15.

D

was

SERM. was never suspected to be otherwise. They

II. see not yet how many ways, or how widely
 they are apt to mistake, nor how fatal
 those mistakes may be ; and care not for
 the pains of a diligent and honest enquiry,
 for fear of being put out of their way ;
 but will rather maintain their own sense of
 things, in opposition to seven, or perhaps
 seventy men, who can render a reason.

Prov.
xxvi. 16.

What then if the words of the wise (as the Preacher says) are as goads to stir up, and urge men to the duties of a virtuous and pious life? a competent measure of self-conceit is a strong armour of defence against these ; and be they never so sharp-pointed, the young man who is thus guarded, can remain untouched, and without smart. And because he does so, he makes no scruple to pronounce them flat and dull. Or, if the case be otherwise, and they prevail to leave a sting behind them (as sometimes they will, in spite of any opposition) he then avoids them as he would a literal goad ; keeps out of their reach, and turns a deaf ear to all serious admonition or advice, as the disturbers of his peace and quiet.

And as he rejects the counsel of the wise, he will for the same reason, be fond also of
 advising

advising with such as himself; young men SERM.
who are grown up with him, and are his II.
companions. For these flatter and en-
courage one another in their way; and
forfeit the kingdom of heaven, in the
same manner as the foolish Son of Solo-
mon did the kingdom of Israel.

1 Kings
xii. 8.

A third reason why youth is subject to
vanity, is, because at that time of life people
are apt to look upon death and judgment,
howsoever certain they may be in the end,
yet, to be at a great distance off; and there-
fore not much the object of present fear.
This proceeds also partly from inexperience;
for although they cannot but see some in-
stances of young men taken off suddenly,
and in their prime, yet those instances
being rare, and not the direct course of na-
ture, they flatter themselves, for want of
so just a notion, of the shortness and un-
certainty of human life, as is obtained
only by longer time and experience.

Misfortunes, sicknesses and deaths, are
frequent every where, and prompt all men
to consider how short is their time, and
how uncertain their standing: but if
these should at any time, have so good an
influence on the heart of a young person,
as to stir up some resolutions of amend-

SERM. ment, he has so quick a taste for pleasure,

II. and is so much more in haste to be presently happy, than to be really wise, that they are seldom of long continuance. Delicious fare, beautiful objects, and harmonious sounds, with other delights of mankind, have a strange unaccountable effect upon his spirits, and paint lively images of happiness in his imagination, which enflame the desire, and influence the whole man; and make every thing conspire to enslave the reason, and lay the conscience asleep. And if by chance he has been so successful in his pleasures, as to spend a day with more than ordinary delight, he applauds and encourages himself, like those fops mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah; saying, *To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*

To what purpose then will such a one hear that precept of St. Paul to young Timothy, *Flee youthful lusts*? He knows the advice is good, and such knowledge has been so often obtruded upon him, that he is weary of it. He does not deny but those lusts are dangerous, and even mortal to some people who are such fools as to be ruined by them; but as for himself, he designs better things, though he does not see

see any necessity of so much ado, or of so much haste, as to flee from them immediately. And this, because he is too short-sighted to be thoroughly sensible with what force and cunning, with what beguiling arts and treachery, and with what fatal success, they war against the soul.

SERM.

II.

I Pet.
ii. 11.

Now, as a remedy for these things, the Psalmist points out the means, by which a young man may cleanse his way, *i. e.* by taking heed thereto according to the word of God. This would be a most effectual remedy, if it were but well applied. But although there is nothing more certain, nothing more solemnly declared in that word of God, than this; *Know thou, that for these things, God will bring thee into judgment*: yet, as the young man had rather not know it, he is hardly convinced of it to any good purpose; he flatters himself, and will not be persuaded but that he may sin *gratis*, and find out ways to escape the consequent misery and punishment of it. I shall therefore endeavour, Secondly, to shew the certainty of the just judgment of God upon sin, or its unavoidable punishment. *Know thou, or be thou assured, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.*

Pf. cxix.
9.

SERM. I say punishment, as the words must

II. needs import ; because God will bring all
 { men into judgment, but those who walk
 in the ways of their own heart, and in the
 sight of their own eyes, he will certainly
 punish. For notwithstanding remission of
 sins is the condition of our Gospel-cove-
 nant, and may be depended upon by every
 sincere penitent, at the final restitution of
 all things ; yet that does not hinder but
 that every sin will have it's share of misery,
 and be accounted for, one way or other,
 either in this world or the next, or rather
 in both. Young people, on the contrary,
 not rightly apprehending those things,
 imagine that they may increase their hap-
 piness, by enjoying the pleasures of sin for
 a season, and escaping the ill consequence
 of it, by repentance hereafter. But if it
 be folly to plant thorns and expect grapes ;
 or thistles, and expect figs, 'tis much more
 so to expect or hope for any acquirement
 of good, or any addition of happiness in
 the ways of sin. God has fixed an inse-
 parable connexion between sin and punish-
 ment, and has resolved that whatsoever a
 man sows, *that* shall he also reap ; neither
 will he be mocked or disappointed in the
 event of things. And accordingly, we
 find

find that he punishes not only those who SERM. finally perish, but even the best of his ser- II. vants; those whom he will reward here-
after with everlasting life. The man
after God's own heart, is a remarkable
instance of this; for notwithstanding it
is expressly said, that the Lord had put
away his sin, yet we find that all the
threatnings of the Prophet were punctu-
ally fulfilled upon him. He suffered very
severely for the little pleasure he had. And
although we have now no Prophet to
point out the particular temporal punish-
ments of every man's sins, nor are those
sins always immediately attended with
their ill effects; yet the miserable conse-
quences, and mischief of them are almost
as manifest in this world, as they are cer-
tain; and there is hardly any one who has
made any progress therein, but must feel
some of them, and know them to be the
proper product of his own sins, as well as
the punishment of them.

2 Sam.
xii. 13.

'Tis to sin, that we owe all the miseries
we suffer; from thence proceed the diseases
both of our bodies and of our minds; it
ruins men's estates and reputation, and
brings them with their families into po-
verty, disgrace, and pain, more certainly
than any misfortunes which men are other-

SERM. wise liable to; and in a word, it has so

II. many ways of misery to lead men into,
 (out of which there is no promise of God,
 or likelihood in nature, that we shall be
 delivered by repentance) that he who will
 be led by it, whether he repent or no,
 must pay dearly for his folly, and at best,
 with repenting Ephraim, be made to bear
 the reproach of his youth.

Jer. xxxi.
 19.

But moreover, as repentance does not
 free a man from the ill effects and punish-
 ment of sin in this world, so neither will
 it *entirely* in the world to come, but he
 must suffer damage in his eternal state, as
 well as temporal.

'Tis easy to believe what we see and feel
 in temporal affairs; that he who by idle-
 ness and luxury squanders away a great
 part of his fortune, cannot have the whole
 in full possession and enjoyment; or that
 he who breaks his constitution by de-
 bauchery, must be so far lessened in his
 stock of health: This, I say, men can
 easily believe, and therefore be persuaded
 to provide against; nor will a wise man be
 satisfied or easy with himself, in wasting
 part of his estate, merely because that he
 has hopes that he shall not lose the whole.
 But although there is the same connexion
 in

in moral things, as certain bad conse-
quence from vice, or as sure and unavoid-
able a loss and damage to the soul's hap-
piness from sin; yet men do not so easily
see it, nor are they so wise and cautious to
provide against it.—But if they cannot be
persuaded of this truth, by philosophical
reasoning, they may attend to the more
sure declaration of God; That he will re-
ward every man according to his works;
and that every man, at the final issue of
things, shall reap according as he sows.
For although eternal life is his free gift,
and not due to any works of righteous-
ness which we have done, or can do, yet
he will give it in different measures or de-
grees, and proportion it according to the
merit, or 'worthiness of particular men;
otherwise men cannot be rewarded accord-
ing to their works.

These things hardly ever come into the
thoughts of young people; but if they
think at all of a future state, they consider
it only in gross, as a state of extreme hap-
piness or misery, which they call Heaven
and Hell; and that, if they can but secure
a place in the better part, by repentance
at some time or other, they know not when,
it will all be as well with them, as if they had
served

SERM.

II.

SERM. served God in holiness and righteousness all

II. the days of their life. They think that, if
 they can but spend some of their latter days
 in the ways of virtue and piety, they may
 not only escape all punishment, but receive
 a full reward, as those labourers in our Sa-
 Matt. xx. viour's parable, are said to have done ;
 who although they wrought but one hour,
 in the cool of the evening, yet were made
 equal to them who had born the burthen
 and heat of the day.

Now this is so unreasonable, and con-
 trary to the nature of God, as he is a most
 just and equitable Judge, that nothing but
 the infatuations of sin, could ever impose
 it upon any man's reason. As for the Pa-
 rable, it only shews the justice and good-
 ness of God, in making the Gentiles
 equally partakers of the Gospel with the
 Jews, although they were not called to be
 his people, till those latter days, as the
 Jews were. There is nothing in it which
 can favour any young person in such a
 design, but it may very well be made use
 of to shew the folly and wickedness of it.
 For those labourers had a very good excuse,
 because no man had hired them ; but had
 they sent into the vineyard in the morning,
 and spent the day in idleness and doing
 mischief,

mischiefs, instead of work, their Lord had SERM.
not been good in making them equal to the II.
rest, but very weak and partial in his
distributions ; which we must not impute
to the Judge of all the Earth.

And yet, this is the case of every young
sinner, who refuses to serve the interest of
his Lord, when he is invited and hired,
and accepts the wages ; but acts in oppo-
sition to him, and yet thinks to gain his
ends, by a device too weak to be offered
to any man upon earth, from whom we
expect any favour. And should he be so
wise as to repent at last, repentance itself,
if it be sincere and not hypocritical, will
prove a very severe reckoning for sin ; and
in short, it is not possible that any man
should sin willfully without paying dearly
for it, and depriving himself of great
part at least, if not of his whole hap-
piness.

But lastly, the most sad and melancholy
consideration of all, is, that every young
person who at present is resolved to walk
in the ways of his own heart, or to do ac-
cording to his own pleasure, is very un-
likely ever to repent at all. To this, I
shall speak but briefly at present, having
frequently made it the subject of my dis-
course :

SERM. course: and notwithstanding it is so plainly

II. affirmed in scripture, and attested by the
experience of mankind; yet the deceitfulness of sin seems to be a match for all; and continues to persuade young people that they may go on in sin, and yet escape the danger of such courses.

They may observe many men advanced in years, who are altered in their way of life, and become more grave and serious in their behaviour, having no regard to the follies of youth. These they take to be true penitents, and good men; and imagine that they themselves shall, of course, be the same when they come to those years. But—how great is the mistake! and if it were not so, how dangerous must such examples be, to one who cannot assure himself of life for a day? But these persons perhaps, are as far from the kingdom of God, in their old age, as ever they were in youth; and have changed their vices not into virtues, but for other vices more agreeable to their age. They are not become more just and holy, more charitable and merciful, or more meek and humble; but rather more worldly and covetous, more peevish and revengeful, and more obstinate and proud. They still retain the love of the world, and
the

the hatred of all who cross them in it; SERM.
which is abundantly sufficient to distin- II.
guish them from good Christians, who are
commanded to love their enemies. ~~~~~

And this, young men, will be your own case, when you come to be old; for God has not only annexed misery and punishment to sin, but hardness of heart also; and therefore, if ever you design to repent in earnest, it must be now, when you are called upon to do it; it cannot be done by time or chance, or any course of nature, but must be your own free and voluntary act. You may persuade yourselves that you design it another time; but if you do not set about it immediately, you only cheat and deceive your souls. For in worldly things (in which people are apt to be in earnest) no man scruples to do that action which he knows he shall never repent of, but be a great gainer by it; and no man in his wits, will ever do what he knows he shall be sorry for, and wish undone; 'tis pure madness, it cannot be.

Let then Solomon persuade you to be so wise, as to *remember your Creator, in the days of your youth*: hearken to the prophet Jeremiah, when he tells you; *It is good for* Lam. iii.
a man, that he bear the yoke in his youth. It 27.
is

SERM. is good;—for it will make the yoke easy,

II. and the burthen light. Choose, says the
 Moralist, that life which is best, and custom will make it the most pleasant. And to conclude,

This will be your wisdom in the sight of God and man, as well as the security of your life and happiness. But if you will not attend unto it, there is no remedy, you must perish in your folly; there is nothing remains but a certain looking for of judgment and the wrath of God.

Of FAITH without WORKS.

JAMES ii. 14.

*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man
say he hath Faith, and have not Works?
Can Faith save him?*

VERY many disputes have been a-SERM.
among divines, concerning salvation III.
by faith or works; all which might, ~~~~~
perhaps, have been avoided, (in a great
measure at least) by the following obser-
vation, viz. That whenever the scripture
speaks of our being saved by faith, or by
grace, it does not point at the final salva-
tion of particular persons, but the Chris-
tian Covenant in general. This is the only
way or state of salvation, into which men
are brought by believing and being bap-
tized; and thus 'tis they are saved by
faith, if they are saved at all, and do not
come short of it by their disobedience.

And because this way of salvation was
ordained merely by the grace or favour of
God, and mankind could not possibly con-
tribute any thing towards it; it is therefore
said

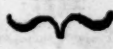
SERM. said to be of grace and not of works.

III. And, for the same reason, St. Paul calls it the *Righteousness of God*; by which it is evident, that he does not mean the attribute of righteousness in him, but *his* method of justifying sinners freely by his Grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, or by the Christian Covenant.

Rom. iii.
22.

Such a belief as produces a sincere and impartial conformity to this Covenant, is that faith which is so highly commended in scripture: but because it is a pearl of great price, and must cost more than some people are willing to part with, counterfeits have been made to pass; with which many have contented themselves, and instead of a real faith producing holiness of life, have taken up with something else, according to their own complexion, and the degree of their infatuation. As, first,

Because faith, in the most common acceptance of the word, signifies believing; and believing the truth is justly rewardable, when there are great prejudices against it, as was the case in primitive times; therefore some have thought themselves safe, by readily believing or assenting to all the opinions, which are held in their own communion, or particular party they are

are of. These generally exclude all others SERM.
from salvation, as Hereticks, and value III.
themselves so much upon their orthodoxy, 
that they see no danger from any neglect
of duty, or any wickedness which they
practise, and are guilty of, almost every day
of their lives.

Secondly, as the word faith is taken
sometimes for the whole of Christianity
(as it is when it is called the Christian
Faith) it must of necessity render all men
safe and happy, who are endued with it,
and live under its influence or power.
And for this reason, many have thought
themselves as safe and happy, by the mere
profession of it, and joining in communion
with the visible catholick Church; though
their lives have been such, that any Church
must be very corrupt, before it can own them
for its members. Whatever becomes of Jews,
Turks, Infidels and Hereticks, these men are
all safe within the pale, and have nothing to
do for salvation but to live and die in the ca-
tholick Faith, without ever examining whe-
ther the articles of their Faith have any foun-
dation or not, either in reason or scripture.

Thirdly, because faith sometimes signi-
fies trust or affiance in God, and an humble
expectation of his mercy through Jesus
E Christ,

SERM. Christ, grounded upon sincere obedience

III. to his laws; therefore some have very willingly mistaken the highest presumption for this faith, and placed themselves among the blessed for believing strongly, though very absurdly, that they shall be saved. In this mistake, there seems to be very great wilfulness; for who cannot see, that if the thing be not true, before they believe it, their believing it can never alter the nature of it, and make it so? But these people resolve all wickedness into doubting; and therefore to them an examination of their lives may prove as dangerous, as an examination of the articles of faith, is to the orthodox; for by this means, one may very probably be brought to doubting, as the other may at least border upon Heresy.

But all these, and whatsoever counterfeit, or pretended faith men may take up with, St. James here charges them with being vain and unprofitable, and strips them of all their pretences, by this one mark, of being separate from works. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?* Interrogations of this kind are well known to imply in them a strong negative.

negative ; into which the words of the SERM.
Text may thus be resolved ; It does not III.
profit in the least, my brethren, though a
man should say he has faith, and have not
works, for certainly, such a faith cannot
save him. And this assertion is true, as
well from the nature of the thing, as from
the express words of scripture ; the whole
design of the gospel being to teach us,
that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we
should live soberly, righteously, and godly in
this present world. But to make it appear
as plain as possible, I shall endeavour to
examine such a faith, as is separate from
good works, and by that means shew that
it is so far from saving a man, that it will
very much increase his guilt, and conse-
quently his punishment.

Tit. ii.
12.

And, first, I begin with our apostle at
the nineteenth verse ; *Thou believest there is*
one God, thou doest well : For to believe in
one God, is the foundation of all religion,
whether natural or revealed ; because *he*
that cometh to God must first believe that he is,
and that he is a rewarder of them that dili-
gently seek him.

Heb. xi.
6.

Such a Faith then must teach a man
that there is a supreme Being, by nature
One ; one individual moral agent, of infi-

SERM. nite justice and holiness, of infinite goodness

III. and mercy, of infinite power and knowledge;
 ~~~~~ and all other perfections: in whose sight  
 all things must of necessity be naked and  
 opened (for they are all his creatures, and  
 the work of his hands) and who, from his  
 nature, must hate and punish all sin and  
 wickedness; and, on the contrary, reward  
 all those that love him, and keep his com-  
 mandments. And if, at the same time, it  
 produces its genuine effects, and teaches a  
 man to love this God with all his heart,  
 with all his soul, and with all his strength;  
 to devote himself to his service, and to live  
 in his fear; it is then a sincere faith,  
 which may happily grow unto eternal life.  
 But, if it produce none of these things, but  
 rather the contrary, and the man leads a  
 worldly and sinful life, in a supine neglect  
 of, or a partial obedience to, the will of  
 God; his Faith is no other than what the  
 devil may lay claim to. For so our apostle  
 Ver. 19. says, *The devils also believe and tremble.*  
 And in this, they seem to go beyond many  
 who profess to believe in God, but could  
 never yet be brought to tremble; but as  
 they live without regard to his laws, so, as  
 much without any dread of his power and  
 justice.

Much

Much better were it for them, never to SERM.  
have heard of, or known this God, than III.  
knowing Him, either to have slighted or  
defied Him: *At whose wrath the Earth* Jer. x.  
*shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able* 10.  
*to abide his indignation.* St. Paul tells us,  
that those people were without excuse, who  
knowing God, did not glorify him as God: Rom. i.  
for which reason God gave them up to un-  
cleanness and to vile affections, to debase  
and dishonour themselves; to fill up the  
measure of their iniquity, and in the dark-  
ness and folly of their hearts, to hasten to  
their own destruction. And 'tis but too  
visible, how the same wickedness is at-  
tended with the same punishment, even  
to this day, among many people who say;  
I believe in God the Father Almighty——

Secondly, the next part of the Faith, by  
which a just man lives, is, to believe in  
Jesus Christ his only son our Lord. So he  
tells us himself, *This is life eternal, that they* John xvii.  
*may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus* 3.  
*Christ whom thou hast sent.* If then a man  
believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the son of  
God, he must know that the doctrine which  
He taught, came from God, and is his  
will; that his precepts are good, and to be  
obeyed by all his disciples; that the punish-



SERM. ments which he threatened, will certainly

III. be inflicted on all who hold this truth in

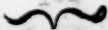
unrighteousness; and that he will protect all his faithful servants, and reward their piety and sufferings for his sake. And if this knowledge leads a man, as it very well may, into the paths of virtue and holiness, by that means it may bring him to eternal life, but not otherwise. For this was the

Acts iii. 26. express design of his coming: *God sent him to bless us* (not in our sins, which is impossible in the nature of the thing, but) *in turning away every one of us from his iniquities*: or, as 'tis otherwise expressed; To pu-

Tit. ii. 14. rify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

If Christ had come, only to be acknowledged by us, that he died for our sins, and reconciled us to God; the bare belief of this had been sufficient, and would have answered the purpose of those men, who, as things are, only flatter and deceive themselves. If that alone had been the Christian Faith, the disciples of Christ would not have cried out; *Who then can be saved?* but rather, who then can fail of salvation? The devil himself (to resume the apostle's argument) would immediately put in his claim, and 'twould be very difficult to

to exclude him ; for he cried out long ago, SERM.  
and when most men were afraid so to do ; **III.**

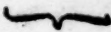
*I know thee who thou art, the holy One of*   
*God.* Mark i.  
24.

But the truth is, salvation by such a dead faith, as does not bring a man to repentance and newness of life, is a thing not possible, even with God himself : it being a contradiction, and as much against his nature, as it is against his revealed will. And will it not very much increase a man's guilt to profess that he is fully persuaded, that God sent so great a person as Jesus Christ, to instruct him in his duty, if he does not, at the same time, follow those instructions ? If, instead of the Gospel, he takes other things for the rule of his life ; follows the multitude in their sinful ways ; measures his dealings by the customs and usages of men of like occupation, whether they are right or wrong ; does his own pleasure, and speaks his own words ; better then were it for him not to say he has faith in Jesus Christ, which must condemn him out of his own mouth, and entitle him to those many stripes, which are allotted to that servant, who knew his master's will, and did it not.

E 4

Thirdly,

SERM. Thirdly, To believe in the holy Ghost,  
III. is the duty of all Christians, and the pre-  
tence of most ; every baptized Christian  
having been initiated, or received into the  
congregation of Christ's flock, in the name  
of the Father, and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Ghost. Now, if this faith in the Ho-  
ly Ghost be only pretended, and not real ;  
no man certainly can be so stupid as to  
think he shall be saved, or rewarded, but  
rather punished for his hypocrisy. But if  
his faith be real, he must have some reason  
or ground for it, taken from the revealed  
will of God, for no other he can have :  
and to believe without reason, is not faith,  
but credulity ; much more to be pitied  
than rewarded. He then, who is instructed  
by the holy scriptures, in the doctrine of  
the Holy Ghost, must know that there is a  
divine Spirit sent forth by Jesus Christ, from  
the Father, to be the comforter, and sanc-  
tifier of the hearts of all the elect people of  
God, *i. e.* of all good men ; who is so near  
at hand to assist and promote our holiness,  
that he is said in scripture, to dwell in us ;  
and the bodies of Christians are, by a fi-  
gure, called the temples of the Holy Ghost.  
This is a very great inducement to make  
all Christians walk circumspectly, and as  
in

in the presence of so holy a guest. And if SERM.  
a man does not do so, but on the contrary III.  
indulges himself in any sinful courses,   
what excuse can he have? what shelter  
will his faith procure for him? If he dares  
own his faith, he must own, at the same  
time, that he committed all his abomina-  
tions, although, he knew, he was in the  
presence of the holy Ghost; that he had  
no regard to that assistance which he might  
have had from him; and that he would  
none of his counsel, but despised all his  
reproofs; and finally, that he did despight  
to the spirit of grace, and was ungrateful  
for the greatest gift that God ever gave to  
mankind through Jesus Christ.

Thus 'tis in respect to the three prime  
articles of the Christian faith; and it would  
be no difficult matter to prove the same  
in respect to any other fundamental article;  
all which have some tendency to make men  
good and holy: and, at the day of accounts,  
the belief of them, will but witness against  
them, if they be not so. As for those  
doubtful opinions which are disputed a-  
mong divines, they cannot be certain ob-  
jects of faith to any one; to nobody indeed  
who, upon diligent enquiry, cannot see  
they are so. But the zealous insisting on  
them,



SERM. them, and imposing them upon other peo-

III. ple, under pain of God's displeasure, is very  
 ~ destructive to religion, as it tends to the  
 breach of charity, and setting men on to  
 the persecution of one another, as well as  
 to unsettle the minds of many well-mean-  
 ing, but weak people, who, from a wrong  
 notion or faith, think themselves in a bad  
 way, and in great want of it, for not be-  
 lieving some things, for which they see no  
 reason, but only because they have been so  
 taught from their infancy.

From the same mistaken notions of  
 faith, many men of learning and virtue,  
 have taught, that in order to acceptance  
 with God, men must not only lead a holy  
 life, but have an orthodox faith; *i. e.*  
 believe aright in all the articles which they  
 suppose to belong to the christian religion;  
 and this too has given a handle to bad  
 men, to imagine that if they can but reach  
 to such a faith, and live and die in it, they  
 may be saved, without any further concern.  
 But this doctrine is not true, but only as  
 it depends upon the sincerity or insincerity  
 of a man's endeavour to know the truth.  
 No man will be condemned, either for  
 want of abilities, or for want of evidence;  
 it can be little less than blasphemy to say  
 that

that he will; but he is blameable for the SERM.  
neglect, or abuse of those things, when he III.  
believes not, or misbelieves from his own  
prejudices, or hatred of the truth. On the  
contrary, if he has a sufficient treasure of  
knowledge in the faith, to make him a  
good man, which any diligent person of  
common sense may have; he may be ac-  
ceptable in the sight of God, though he  
should be honestly mistaken in some things.

To make this appear, and to take off  
all hopes of salvation by faith, from such  
as lead a careless and sinful life, I shall  
endeavour (briefly as the time will permit)  
to shew on what account faith is so highly  
commended, or wherein the merit of it  
consists.

And first, faith is commendable, as it is  
necessary, and the only sure foundation of  
all religion. Before a man can do his duty,  
he must believe those articles of faith,  
which are proper to move him to it; before  
he can perform the will of God, he must  
believe such and such things to be the will  
of God. Here it is very easy to see, that  
this does not imply any merit in the act  
of believing, for its own sake; but only as  
it is necessary to some other end. Religion  
signifies an obligation, and therefore no-  
thing

SERM. thing can properly be called an article of religion, unless it obliges a man to some duty.

III.

~ The scripture indeed does seem to distinguish good and bad men, by believers and unbelievers; but still, that is not from any merit of believing alone, but because, in those times, the profession of the faith being dangerous, none but good men would pretend to it, who after mature examination, were fully persuaded of the truth, and therefore as fully resolved to obey. To be persuaded, and to obey, have the same or a very near signification, and <sup>\* πεισμαι.</sup> in Greek, are expressed by the same \* word; so that when believing, or faith, implies in it obedience, it may have merit, but not otherwise.

Secondly, faith is commendable as it is an argument of a virtuous disposition, and a sincere love of the truth. This appears from the real, but hidden cause of unbelief; which is not want of evidence, as is pretended, but prejudice, and a dislike to those things which are most true. Whosoever heartily and diligently attends to the evidence which God has given, will find reason enough to believe; whereas to others who love darkness rather than light, the greatest light will

will be of no effect ; *If they hear not Moses* SERM.  
*and the prophets,* or (which is all one) if III.  
they hear not Christ and his apostles, Luke  
*neither will they be persuaded, though one rose* xvi. 31.  
*from the dead.*

God requires not only those who saw the miracles of Christ and his apostles to believe, but us also, to whom their history is delivered down by human and fallible means. And very justly too ; because we see by experience, that a virtuous disposition does not need an absolute certainty, but good men believe now, though they have not seen ; whereas, on the contrary, some of another sort, would not be persuaded, though they did see, and though more than *one* only rose from the dead. In this case, a man's faith is rewardable, not for his aptness to believe in general, upon little or no grounds, which is rather a weakness, but for his love of virtue and holiness, which makes him good, upon less motives, and with greater disadvantages, than those men who have seen, and had greater certainty of the truth. But this is a disposition which wicked men are supposed to be very far from, and therefore must be as far from that saving faith which proceeds from it.

Thirdly,



SERM. Thirdly, Faith is commendable as it is  
 III. the best, and indeed the only sure founda-  
 ~~~~~ tion of an uniform and lasting virtue. I  
 say the only one, because a man's reason, though assisted by learning and the study of philosophy, is yet too weak to maintain the conflict always against the lower appetites; much less can it hold out against all the opposition a man's integrity will meet with, from the whole artillery of the world, the flesh and the devil. A man may be innocent, and good for some time, merely from a natural disposition to goodness, or want of temptations to the contrary; or from a happy circumstance of things about him: but this is chance rather than virtue, and as subject to alteration, as is the frail nature of man, and the things he is conversant with. He only who is good for God's sake, or upon a principle of faith, will be constantly and permanently so. Such a one being firmly persuaded of the truth of God's promises, and of the difference he will one day make between the righteous and the wicked, faithfully depends upon his protection, and so, in the midst of all dangers and temptations, is supported, or lives by faith. Faith therefore is meritorious, not

merely as it is an assent to the truth (which SERM.
no man, upon proper inducements, can III.
refuse) but as it sets a man in a true chris-
tian posture, and prepares him to do or
suffer any thing for righteousness sake; and
to hold his integrity, though it should cost
him all that is dear unto him, or life it-
self. And 'tis upon this account, that St.
Paul speaks so much in commendation
of faith, which he sometimes calls the
righteousness, and sometimes the obedience
of faith; because such a righteousness, or
obedience, which is of faith, is the only
means by which a man can hope to be pre-
served upright, and in the favour of God.
In the third chapter to the Romans he
concludes all men, both Jews and Gentiles
under sin; no schemes of philosophy among
the Gentiles, nor the law of Moses among
the Jews, was able to justify a man before
God. But in opposition to these, or any
thing else, faith, or receiving the gospel,
was able, because it did not require a per-
fect unfinning obedience, but justified the
ungodly by making room for repentance
and pardon through Jesus Christ. This is
what he means by believing on him, who
justifies the ungodly, as he says, *Rom. iv. 5.*
not obstinate unrepenting sinners, for being
ortho-

SERM. orthodox men, but all those who repent,

III. and, for want of a better, preserve themselves sincerely in the obedience of faith; or live according to the terms of the gospel.

And when he concludes that *a man is justified by Faith, without the deeds of the law*,
 Rom. iii. 23. he does not mean, without observation of the moral law, but the ceremonial; which he mentions, that the Jews might not boast, or set themselves above the Gentiles upon that account. This is exemplified in the person of Abraham, who, he says, was justified by his faith, at a time, when he was not circumcised; and therefore that ceremony could not avail to his justification.

The same example, St. James makes use of, to explain St. Paul's meaning, in opposition to the false doctrine, which corrupt men had drawn from it; and by that we may see wherein the merit of faith does consist. For Abraham was not justified for holding any opinions without reason, nor merely for believing the truth, that there is one God, in opposition to the idolatry of the times; but for laying aside, all prejudice, and attending sincerely to God's commands, as his duty required. And this he manifested by his obedience,
 when

when it contradicted not only his personal SERM.
 interest, but all his worldly hopes: *He that* III.
had received the promises, offered up his only
begotten Son, of whom it was said; that in Heb. xi.
Isaac shall thy seed be called. Nor did he do 17.
 it (as some have imagined) by a supersti-
 tious and blind zeal, but by a purely rati-
 onal obedience; he reasoned himself into
 it, *accounting that God was able to raise him* Ver. 19.
up, even from the dead; from whence also he
received him in a figure. i. e. he had seen an
 instance of the power of God, by having
 that son, when both he and his wife were,
 in respect to child-bearing, dead or past
 age. By this we may see, with St. James,
 the merit of Abraham's faith; viz. It
wrought with his works, and by works was
faith made perfect. Ver. 22. If Abraham
 had believed never so rightly, yet, if he had
 not obeyed, his Faith had been imperfect,
 and would have witnessed against him, that
 he did not do what he knew to be his duty.
 By no means could it be imputed to him
 for righteousness; nor will a bare faith
 be so imputed to any one else; for by works
 a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Nevertheless, whatsoever may be urged
 to this purpose (which is indeed the whole
 tenour and design of the scripture) where

SERM. the true merit of Faith is wanting, there

III. men will be very apt to put something else instead of it; and for want of true holiness, lay great stress and value themselves upon right opinions; by which they get nothing better than divisions, and hatred of one another. But, could a man trace all the doctrines which have been disputed ever since the apostle's times, and choose exactly all that was true, and reject the false; he would not be a jot the better for that alone, but so much the worse, if he were not otherwise good: and the apostle's argument would still hold against him; *i.e.* The Devil would be as orthodox as he; for all those disputes belong to the history of his own times; and 'tis very plain that He had no small share in the management of them.

It cannot be denied but that in order to do right, it is necessary to believe right; but then, we must consider too, that these articles of faith, which are absolutely necessary for that purpose, are few, and so plain that 'tis hardly possible for any well-meaning man to mistake them.

In those things all good men naturally agree; *the wayfaring men*, says the Prophet, *though fools, shall not err therein.*

There

There may be some things of a higher SERM.
nature, which are useful to a holy life; but III.
since they are not absolutely necessary, they
should not be contended for, to the breach
of charity, and persecution of one another.

And to conclude: the man who values
himself upon his orthodoxy in the faith,
merely as such, in the apostle's judgment, is
a vain man; and he would have him know
that **faith** without works is dead: 'tis no
further meritorious than as it is productive
of good fruits; but is as useless to salvation
as a dead carcase, and well were it for the
man, if he could but bury it out of the way;
since it will but witness against him, and
be an aggravation of his sins. *If ye know* John xiii.
these things, says Christ, *happy are ye* (not in 17.
that knowledge alone, but) *if ye do them*.
And his apostle St. John; *Let no man deceive* 1 John.
you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous; i. e. iii. 7.
he only will be so accounted in the sight of
God; who will have all men to repent, as
well as believe; all who name the name of
Christ, or pretend to profess his gospel, to
depart from iniquity.

HOW CHRISTIANS live by FAITH.

GALAT. iii. 11.

—*The just shall live by Faith.*

WE find these words in several of SERM.
St. Paul's epistles, and in the pro- IV.
phet Habakkuk, from whence Hab. ii.
they are taken. As they stand there, they 4.
contain this general doctrine; that righteous men, by believing the promises of God, and continuing stedfastly to put their trust in him, and to act according to it, in spite of any opposition, or temptation to the contrary, obtain that support and safety, which is not to be obtained by other men, or by any other means. The just are there opposed to such as are lifted up, and apt to boast of their own strength and understanding: and so to put their chief confidence in second causes, or that security which is visible, and appears to be best, from the present situation of temporal affairs.

We have a rare example of this trust in 2 Kings
God, in king Hezekiah, who depending, xviii.
F 3 upon

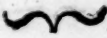
SERM. upon his promise and protection, would

IV. not yield to the great king of Assyria, though vastly superior to him in numbers and strength of war: whereas, many other kings of Israel and Judah were destroyed and perished by withdrawing their trust from God, and following their own devices and wicked policy.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul makes use of the words of my text, in this same general sense, in exhorting his converts to continue stedfast in the doctrine and profession of the gospel, notwithstanding those persecutions they might expect from their unbelieving adversaries. And, to this purpose, he puts them in mind of God's promise, taken from the same place of the prophet Habakkuk: *For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*; having told them just before, that they had need of patience to make their life of faith perfect, and to entitle them to the promises, after they had done the Will of God.

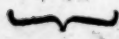
Heb. x.
37.

In the next chapter, he produces a cloud of witnesses, or examples of righteous men, who by such a faith, or firmly trusting to the promises of God, had done many wonderful things, and obtained to themselves
great

great blessings, and tokens of his favour SERM.
and protection. By all which, we may IV.
learn what that faith is, by which, both 
the prophet and apostle say, *The just shall*
live; not any thing instead of, and much
less in opposition to good works; but so
believing the promises of God, as to trust
to them by a patient continuance in well
doing, although they should be tempted
to unrighteousness, by any object of plea-
sure or profit, or even the safety of their
lives. This is that faith which is peculiar
to just men; and by which they over-
come the world, and obtain a blessed im-
mortality.

Now this general doctrine of the pro-
phet, the apostle accommodates to the
subject-matter he is treating of, in this
epistle to the Galatians. He does not here
use it by way of exhortation not to re-
nounce the faith for fear of persecution;
but as a persuasive argument, to convince
them, that by their faith in Christ, they
were free from the law of Moses, and need
not be circumcised or submit to it. Many
of the Jews continued still in the observa-
tion of their own religion, notwithstanding
they believed in Christ; for they could not
imagine that that law, which, for so many

SERM. hundred years, had distinguished them as

IV.  the peculiar people of God, should be abolished; and therefore they taught the brethren (as we read in the acts of the apostles) that except they were circumcised, after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. And to this doctrine, the gentile converts were too ready to hearken, being, by custom and education, fond of a carnal and outward religion, and not well acquainted with the nature of Christianity. The apostle therefore very sharply reproves them with the name of foolish Galatians; and, by arguments which, at that time, were easy to be understood, convinces them that they might be justified, and become the people of God, by believing the gospel alone, without adding to it the observation of the law of Moses; which was such a law as could justify no man. For the ritual or ceremonial part of that law, had nothing in it, which could procure remission of sins, and was good only as it was commanded of God, and instructive of better things: and as for the moral part of it, though it was of eternal obligation, and could give life to the observers of it; yet, as the apostle says, it was weak through the flesh; or, rather, the flesh was too weak
to

to answer its demands, which was a perfect innocence and obedience: *The man that doeth them, shall live in them.* SERM. IV.

There was therefore a necessity of a better covenant, which was not attended with so severe a sanction; but made room for repentance and remission of sins, and which could render a sincere, though imperfect obedience acceptable to God. The gospel Covenant, to which we are admitted by believing Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and trusting to the promises which He gave us in his Father's Name, being such as this; the apostle, to convince them of the truth of it, among other things, applies that general doctrine of faith in God's promises, mentioned by the prophet Habakkuk, to the particular belief of the gospel; which we suppose the holy Spirit ultimately pointed at, though the prophet speaks in general terms, and might more immediately point at something else; as if he had said, 'Tis no strange or new thing, that God should justify men by faith, for it has been always his method to accept and save all such as believe and put their trust in him. You may see this, not only in the example of faithful Abraham, but spoken of as a general truth, by the

SERM. the prophet Habakkuk, in these words, *The*
 IV. *just shall live by Faith.*

Which words therefore, being thus applied, may be paraphrased after the following manner; righteous men, or sincere penitents, believing Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and conforming themselves to his laws, do by that means, obtain everlasting life.—This explanation of text may sufficiently instruct us, that although faith in the gospel may be opposed to the ceremonial law of Moses, or to a perfect obedience to the moral law, as St. Paul, in this epistle, and other places, opposes it; yet can it, by no means, be opposed to good works or a holy life, as we are plainly taught by St. James. And indeed, it is so contrary to the whole intent and meaning of the gospel, that none who give any sincere attention to it, can think otherwise, but that their eternal life must depend not only on their believing the truths of that gospel, but on adding to their faith, a uniform practice of all christian virtues.

But notwithstanding this, 'tis too plain that there are many people, who mistaking their present as well as future happiness, cannot find in their hearts to repent sincerely, and make an entire reformation of their

their lives, but hope to make amends for SERM.
great deficiencies therein, by adhering IV.
firmly and zealously to their right opini-
ons; in which, although men may differ
almost as much as they do in outward
complexion, yet every one's own are taken
for the true evangelical faith, and to have
great merit in them; especially, when there
is added moreover a decent regard to the
external duties of the religion which he
professes. In opposition to this very great
mistake, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, that faith does not serve instead,
or exclude the necessity of good works, but
rather requires them, under pain of incurr-
ing greater guilt, and consequently severer
punishment; and

Secondly, how, or in what sense Chris-
tians may be said to live by faith.

And first, by good works I do not mean
any particular works of piety or charity,
by which a man, otherwise wicked, may
think to save himself; but an impartial
obedience to all the precepts of the gospel,
according to the measure of every one's
knowledge and abilities. So much as this
is required of every christian, by the na-
ture of that faith which he professes. For
if Christ came to destroy the works of the
devil;

SERM. devil; to turn every one of us from our

IV. iniquities, and to purify unto himself a
 { peculiar people zealous of good works; and
 if all things which He or his apostles taught
 or commanded, manifestly tend to that
 purpose, as the scripture most plainly and
 abundantly testifies; our faith, or believing
 these things, must tend to the same, or else
 it can never make us his peculiar people,
 or subjects of his kingdom. The stronger
 that faith is by which we believe his mission
 and authority in general, the more strictly
 are we engaged to obey his commands,
 and not rebel against that authority: and
 by how much greater knowledge we have
 of the particulars to be believed or prac-
 tised by Christians, by so much more ex-
 actness our duty must be required of us:

Luke
 xii. 48. *for unto whomsoever much is given, of him
 shall be much required.* Every orthodox or
 right opinion concerning the Faith, is so
 much light given us of God, and conse-
 quently so many obligations to the prac-
 tice of what we know. And therefore,
 what excuse can he have, who boasts, or
 values himself for being in the light, if he
 does not walk as in the light? If it be
 true that he has, as he thinks, a right
 understanding in the doctrines which he
 holds

holds for truth, it can only serve to up-
braid him with greater obstinacy, and
more wilful disobedience; and bring upon
him that wrath of God, which is revealed
from heaven particularly against those
who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

SERM.
VI.
Rom. i.
18.

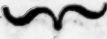
Moreover, if we consider the nature of
believing or assenting to any thing as true,
we shall find that there is nothing in it
which can distinguish any person as righ-
teous, or make amends for a partial obe-
dience.

A diligent search for truth, and a sin-
cere attention to it, are indeed commend-
able duties; but when a man has evidence
before his eyes, there is no virtue or me-
rit in believing or giving his assent, be-
cause it is not in his power to do otherwise.
And if he believes without evidence, or
pretends to believe contrary to it, as some
have pretended, he may be the weaker man
or a hypocrite, but never the better chris-
tian, or more in favour with him who *hath*
no pleasure in fools.

Ecccl. v.
4.

But the great commendation of faith,
and that which distinguishes a good and
faithful servant of Christ from other men,
is obeying the truth as well when it is
inconsistent with his present pleasure, in-
terest

SERM. tereft or safety, as when it is not. Such a

IV.  one believes the power and promises of God, and lives by them as his chief confidence and support. Such was the faith of Abraham, who, contrary to his natural affection, and the hopes of his posterity, obeyed God in offering his Son, being fully assured that God was able to raise him from the dead, and make good to him all his promises. And as a man's believing can have no merit, or be of any signification to him, but only as it has influence on his practice, so besides that, there is no other evidence or demonstration that he does believe. *Shew me thy faith, says St. James, without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* There is no other mark of a man's being orthodox in the faith, but his leading a holy life.

'Tis certain, that all divine revelations are of equal authority, and equally demand assent from every one, as soon as he is made sensible that they are revealed. And let us observe too, that those truths which more immediately relate to practice are the plainest, and easiest to be discovered. If then a man's faith or believing be as regular as it is strong, it will first lay hold on these last mentioned; and not pass them

them by, to be exercised on such as are SERM.
more difficult and doubtful. But here, IV.
perhaps it may be said, that a man may
believe those easy practical truths, though
through weakness, he is something deficient
in the performance, and does not make a
shew of his faith, as some other christians
may do.

In answer to which, let us see in some
particular instances, of what benefit such
a faith will be, and what hopes a man
may build upon it, of pardon of his sins
and acceptance with God.

The drunkard may believe what the
apostles and other inspired writers have
said concerning the sin of drunkenness;
the misery and danger that attends it; the
judgments denounced against it; and the
certain destruction of all those who are
addicted to it; he may believe this, I say,
and he is much in the right so to do; but
by that means he will only shew himself
the greater sot, for persisting in his sin, in
spight of such belief.

They who walk in the lusts of uncleanness
(of whom there are too many) may
likewise believe, that *whoremongers and* Heb. xiii.
adulterers God will judge; and all other
threatenings against that sin, in the holy
scriptures;

SERM.

IV.

2 Pet. ii.

10.

scriptures; that (as St. Peter says) when God punishes the unjust, it will fall chiefly on them who walk after the flesh in those lusts; and in short, that 'tis a sin altogether inconsistent with being a member of Christ, and therefore attended with a certain spiritual death. These things they may very well believe, for they are fully and plainly revealed; much plainer than those things are, about which men dispute and condemn one another: but as long as they continue in the state they are, 'tis much to be suspected that they do not believe, but are more befotted than the drunkard himself. For certainly, if they were, as they pretend to be, true church-men, and in communion with saints, they would not, with profane Esau sell their birth-right for something beneath a mess of pottage; and live as they never had heard of such a person as the Holy Ghost. But if they will, notwithstanding this, insist upon their merit of sound believing; I must needs exhort them to add one more article to their creed, which as yet, they seem not rightly to have considered; and that is, the difficulty of getting rid of this vice, and the danger of all who are under its power. They may find it in many places of scripture,

ture, and particularly, in *Prov. ii. 19.* None SERM.
that go unto her, return again, neither take IV.
they hold of the paths of life. 'Tis much
 better for them to believe this, than to
 confirm the truth of it by their own
 example.

The same reasoning will hold against
 any habit of vice whatsoever, as long as
 the wrath of God is so clearly revealed
 against all unrighteousness; and we may
 send the partial obedient sinner, who thinks
 to make amends by his faith, to what St.
 Paul says of the works of the flesh; that
 they are manifest to be these, *adultery, for- Gal. v.*
nication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,
withcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath,
strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders,
drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the
which, says he, I tell you before, as I have
also told you in time past, that they who do
such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of
God. 19.

If any man believe not this, as soon as
 he knows it to be revealed, he cannot be
 orthodox, or sound in the faith: If he
 does believe it, and is not engaged thereby,
 to a reformation of himself in every par-
 ticular, he can get nothing else by his
 faith, but an assurance that he is one of
 those

SERM. those miserable wretches, who are to be

IV. *cast into outer darknefs, where is weeping, and gnafhing of teeth.*

In a word: although *the juft fhall live by faith*, yet no wicked person, or hypocritical pretender to believing, can have any benefit thereby; 'tis entirely oppofite both to the design, and letter of the christian law, the law of that person in whom they pretend to believe, and submit to, as their king and master; and who has exprefly declared, that he will own no workers of iniquity.

Therefore, fecondly, I fhall fhew, in what fenfe, christians may be faid to live by faith.

And the first is, that general fenfe in which the word is used by the prophet Habakkuk; viz. by ferving God faithfully to the utmost of their power, in expectation of his favour and acceptance. By fuch a faith, all good and holy men from the beginning of the world have lived; and all that fhall come after, will continue to live to the world's end. Such were the Patriarchs and others of the like difpofition, whether under the law of Nature, or the law of Moses, or the law of Chrift. None of these were able to perform a perfect obedience;

and therefore strictly speaking, cannot be said SERM.
to have lived by works. But by their faith IV.
depending upon God, and sincerely endea-
vouring to please him in all things, they
were, and all such will ever be accepted
of him as his chosen people, and ordained
to eternal life.

Secondly, although God in mercy did
thus deal with his faithful servants, yet he
never declared his will so as to make an ex-
press covenant of faith with mankind, till
the coming of Christ. Before that time, the
law was in full force, and the conditions
were; *The man that doeth them, shall live
in them.* But now 'tis plainly revealed
and preached, that through Christ, *all that* Acts xiii.
believe are justified from all things, from which 39.
they could not be justified by the law of Moses.
So God loved the world, that he gave his only Jo. iii. 16.
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him,
should not perish, but have everlasting life.
For this purpose, St. John declares that he
wrote his gospel; *That ye might believe that* Jo. xx. 31.
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that
believing ye might have life through his name.

Faith then being, by the certain appoint-
ment of God, the condition of the covenant
of life; the christian may, of all others,
most properly be said to live by it. By

SERM. being baptized into this covenant of faith,

IV. we are made members of Christ, and children of God, and as such, have in us the seeds of immortality; *being, as St. Peter*
 1 Pet. i. 23. *says, born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Thirdly, As the Christian is thus brought into a state of life, or salvation, or has the means of eternal life put into his hands, by his believing in Jesus Christ; so he continues to lead this present life according to that faith. For whosoever will live by faith, must also, with the apostle, live a
 Gal. ii. 20. *life of faith. The life which I now live in the flesh, says he, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. We are not dead to the law, that we may serve our own will and pleasure,*
 Jer. 19. *but that we might live unto God.*

Now faith, or a belief of what is revealed in the gospel, is the only sure foundation, and support of such a life; the only victory that overcometh the world; and without it, 'tis not possible to please God, or to live unto him. In this sense therefore every christian must live by his faith, or else be dead in trespasses and sins. And as it very much concerns every professor
 of

of Christianity, to consider this well, and SERM.
lay it to heart, if he designs to reap any bene- IV.
fit by his profession, I shall briefly speak a ~~~~~
word or two more to that purpose, by way
of instruction and motive, before I con-
clude.

And first, that *faith*, by which the just Heb. xi.
man lives, *is* (as St. Paul tells us) *the sub-* 1.
stance, or rather confident expectation, of
things hoped for ; the evidence of things not
seen. It brings all those exceeding great
and precious promises, which God has
made through Christ, nearer to our sight;
and makes us expect them, not as things
uncertain, but such as shall assuredly be
made good in their appointed time. Every
one therefore will live and act according
to the proportion of this faith, or accord-
ing as he believes in earnest, or only in
pretence. If he is a worldly man, he will
act in strict friendship with the world,
and take his measures according to the
usages and customs of men like himself.
He will be influenced by temporal things,
as they are present to his view ; and by
such happiness as the world promises ;
and pursue it in every particular, without
a just regard to better things ; because

SERM. they are at too great a distance to attract

IV. or draw his attention, and much less can they determine his choice. And hence it is, that concealing of truth, for the sake of advantage, imposing upon the ignorance or yielding temper of other men, with numberless ill arts, and cunning devices, pass with such men for wisdom. In such things they applaud themselves and one another, in contempt of the conscientious man, or true Christian; who lives and acts as in the presence of God, and in expectation of his favour and blessing. Whatever these worldly men pretend to believe, they walk by sight, and not by faith; and by that very mark, are distinguished from those just men who are christians indeed.

Secondly, To encourage in us this life of faith, consider, that worldly men have no happiness, which can justly be envied, or desired by us. For, not only the promises, but the threatenings of God, are so clearly revealed, so well attested, so agreeable to the nature of God, and the reason of man; that, whether they will or no, they cannot help suspecting them to be true; and from thence are often very miserable. And if
we

we add to this, the vanity of those things SERM.
in which they delight; the shortness and IV.
uncertainty of their duration; the trou-
ble and disappointments with which they
are attended, together with their dying
comforts and approaching fears, we shall
easily believe what the Psalmist says, *That* Pf. xxxii.
many sorrows shall be to the wicked. 10.

On the contrary, the Christian who
lives by faith, is freed from that continual
weariness, which is inseparable from the
pursuit of vanity; as long as he can quench
his thirst, at the fountain of living wa-
ters, he need not labour, in hewing out
broken cisterns. And in the midst of all
these troubles, fears, or sufferings which
may happen to him, he is supported by
that word of faith; *If God be for us,*
who can be against us? If then, he should Rom. viii.
at any time, be oppressed by the mighty, 31.
or, (as the son of Sirach says) overweigh-
ed by the rich, and suffer in his temporal
affairs, he knows it is but for a short
time, and that, at the end, it will even
turn to his advantage. If it increases his
patience, or prompts him to a more dili-
gent application to God, he will be amply
rewarded for all the evil he suffers. Or,
should there be war, famine, or pestilence

SERM. in the land, (things very terrible, and

IV. shocking to other people) he is not mightily cast down, nor in despair; because such things come by the will of God, and He is glorified thereby. He can say with the prophet; *With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

Ifai. xxvi.

9.

To conclude; there being no branch of the christian profession but what has a tendency to establish a man in holiness, and consequently in favour with God; he who is diligent to live according to it, must obtain thereby, a strong confidence in him, and great boldness in the day of adversity; and at all times, such a peace of mind, as the world cannot give. The word of God, which he believes and depends upon, assures him

Pf. cxix.

165.

Ifai. xxvi.

3.

of it. Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.

Let us go on therefore with the prophet, and say, *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

Ver. 4.

How

How we are saved by GRACE.

EPHES. ii. 8, 9.

*For by grace are ye saved, through faith,
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift
of God.*

9. Not of works, least any man should boast.

FOR a right understanding of the SERM.
scripture, 'tis necessary in reading V.
any part of it, to attend with great
diligence, to what the particular design and
purpose of the writer is; and not to take
every verse as a distinct aphorism or sen-
tence by it self, and so put what sense we
please upon it, which the signification of
the words will bear, or which is most vul-
gar or common in the time and place we
live. For perhaps, as they stand in the
context, and were used many ages ago,
they may signify quite another thing, and
be nothing at all to that purpose to which
they are applied. This is always the case
when men make interpretations contrary to
the common sense, reason or experience of
mankind; or to the nature of God, or
other

SERM.

V.

other plain and undisputed places of scripture: which is too often done, and is the occasion of many false doctrines, and needless controversies; to the great hindrance of christian charity, peace, and holiness, which are the end and design of all scripture and true doctrines whatsoever.

The epistles of St. Paul are in a particular manner, liable to this abuse. For, 'tis plain to any diligent and attentive reader, that he frequently uses the same words in different senses, according to the subject matter in hand, or as they would serve his purpose. And from hence some men, not observing the apostle's argument, and the thread of his discourse, (which has some difficulty in it, and requires pains) have applied what he says concerning the purposes of God in rejecting the Jews, and receiving the Gentiles into favour; or taking what nation he pleases, to be his peculiar people; these things, I say, they have applied to the election and reprobation of particular persons, although 'tis done in spite of reason and the apostle's argument, the nature of God and the doctrine of the whole scriptures. For to make some Jews, and some Gentiles; to give positive laws to some, and not to others, or to give what
measure

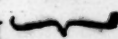
measure of light and knowledge he pleases, SERM.
to any of his people, is what is not at all V.
inconsistent with the nature and attributes of God; for he can, and will finally judge all men, according to what they have thus received by his gracious will and pleasure, and render to every one according to his works. But, to design men for everlasting destruction before they had any being, and punish them for not doing what, 'tis owned, they could not do; is quite another thing, and must be far from the righteous judge of all the earth. Such a doctrine could never have been received, especially among christians, if it had not been a seeming excuse for sin; which corrupt nature is ever apt to frame, though never so foolish and weak. And we may very well suppose this to be a favourite falsehood of Satan's, who, at the day of judgment, as well as they whom he has seduced, may have nothing better to say for himself. But I say no more of it at present, as not belonging to my purpose, any further than as it is an abuse of scripture, which bears some relation to that which the words of my text have suffered, by being made an excuse for a careless and
sinful

SERM. sinful life. For as some, by wresting the

V. scriptures, would persuade us that holiness
 is impracticable, except only by a few, who
 are foreknown and predestinated to it; so,
 there are others, who are as willing to
 think it needless, or at most, not absolutely
 necessary to salvation, because St.
 Paul here says; *By grace are ye saved, through
 faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the
 gift of God. Not of works, lest any man
 should boast.*

These words therefore I shall first endeavour to explain; and secondly, shew that the final salvation of particular persons depends upon their own behaviour, or their own works.

And first, By the words *ye are saved*, the apostle does not mean, that all they to whom he wrote, were absolutely certain of eternal life; or already saved, for that cannot be as long as men are still upon earth: nor did he think them so; for if he had, all his admonitions, and arguments to persuade them to continue steadfast in the faith and doctrine of the Gospel had been quite needless. There would have been no such necessity to tell them, they must take to themselves the whole armour of God, and exert their utmost strength,

strength, that they might be able to stand SERM.
in the evil day, if they were already safe, V.
and not exposed to great danger. By 
which, 'tis easy to see, that the words cannot signify the final salvation of men, but only the state of it, or the means of eternal life, such as the christian calling is. And thus, 'tis said of the first converts, that *the Lord added to the church daily, not such as should be saved,* (as our translation has it) or designed for eternal life by the hidden purposes of God; but such as *were* saved, or brought into a state of salvation, by believing the preaching of the apostles. These becoming christians were added to the christian church, although every individual person was not absolutely sure of eternal salvation. Acts ii. 47.

Secondly, Into this state of salvation, the Ephesians and all other christians are brought, by the grace or favour of God, through faith or believing the gospel. For it was God who first promised, and afterwards gave his Son for the redemption of mankind; it was He who sent his apostles to preach, and gave with them, the Holy Ghost, enabling them to work miracles, and thereby confirm the truth of what they taught, by such evidence, and in such a
man-

SERM. manner, as was suited to the capacities of

V. all men. He therefore having not only
 ~~~~~ revealed all the objects of Faith, but made  
 them credible by signs and wonders, and  
 divers gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and being  
 likewise pleased to accept them, who before  
 were heathens, for his people, and admit  
 them into the kingdom of his Son, or to  
 christianity, which signifies the same thing ;  
 it is therefore very justly said to be through  
 his favour, that he did these things, and  
 that they were thus saved or put into the  
 way of salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ.

And here we may plainly see, in what  
 sense men are said to be saved by faith ; *viz.*  
 By their faith or believing, they are first ad-  
 mitted into a state or way of salvation ; and  
 afterwards, that same faith is a just and rea-  
 sonable motive, and support of their well  
 doing, or leading a holy life here, by  
 which they obtain everlasting life hereafter.

Observe likewise, That that grace by  
 which the Ephesians are said to be saved,  
 is no other than that which has appeared,  
 and is given unto all men ; It is not any  
 particular favour shewed to some, and de-  
 nied to others, who are as ready and as  
 willing to receive it ; but that which God  
 gives to every one, without respect of per-  
 sons.

sons. And all we who are baptized, and profess the christian faith, and are favoured with the light of the gospel, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost, may as truly be said to be saved by Grace through Faith, as those people to whom the apostle writes, although by the very bad face of religion, it may justly be feared that many will fail of final salvation, or eternal life. SERM. V.

That distinction therefore, which is made between common and special or saving grace, is very weak, and without any ground in scripture, or any where else, but in the fancies of some men. For if God gives the means of salvation to all, (which is the utmost the word grace can signify) it becomes saving or not saving, as every man is pleased to make use of it. He may indeed, and 'tis plain that he does, give a greater measure of strength and knowledge to some than to others; but then, 'tis as plain both from his word and our own reason, that he will in judgment require nothing beyond that measure which he has given: he will not demand an account of five talents from those to whom he has given but two.

Thirdly; If by the word *saved* was meant absolutely their final salvation, the following

SERM. following words, *And that not of yourselves,*

V. *it is the gift of God,* might seem to favour  
 ~~~~~ the laziness and negligence of those, who  
 would have nothing to do, but to accept
 of eternal life, as a free gift, without any
 conditions of holiness at all. But if we
 observe what has been said, it will appear
 that St. Paul only tells the Ephesians that
 their being made Christians, was a gift of
 God, to which they were by no means
 able to help themselves. The weakness of
 their condition, he expresses in the first
 verse, by their being dead in trespasses and
 sins; they were in a state, out of which
 they could no more help themselves, than
 a dead man can arise out of the grave.
 They were not only without hope, but
 without thought or desire to get out of it.
 On the contrary, they rather opposed their
 deliverance, till they were convinced, by
 the mighty power of God, evidently shew-
 ing itself in the apostles, that Christianity
 was the very truth, and the only way to
 happiness, and salvation. God having
 given, not only his Son for their redemp-
 tion, but all the means also, and motives
 of believing in him; the whole can be no
 otherwise than a free gift of his, towards
 which they themselves could contribute
 nothing

nothing at all. But because it cannot be SERM.
denied but that eternal life is a free gift V.
of God, as well as the means of it; let
us see what is the scripture-signification of
that phrase, *The gift of God*, or to be given
of God.

Now, for that purpose, consider, that
God being the creator of heaven and earth,
and the author of all things therein, a man
cannot receive or enjoy any thing, but
what comes from him; and for this reason,
whatsoever men attain to by their own
diligence or virtue, and whatsoever they
miss or fail of by their own negligence or
vice, is said in scripture to be given or not
given of Him. So that although eternal
life is the free gift of God, yet that does
not exclude a man's necessary endeavours
to attain unto it; much less will it excuse
his negligence therein. And that the phrase
is thus used in scripture, many instances
may be seen.

In the twenty-ninth chapter of Deutero-
nomy we read that Moses, at the command
of God, having assembled the children of
Israel, and put them in mind of God's
great mercy and favour towards them, in
bringing them out of Egypt, and working
so many signs and wonders before their
H eyes;

SERM. eyes; upbraids their ingratitude, and hard-

V. nefs of heart, in the following words; *Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive,*

Ver. 4.

and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. By the common acceptation of these words, it may seem as if the people were not at all blame-worthy, but rather to be pitied, that God had not given them a better heart and understanding; whereas, 'tis easy to see, that they are here severely rebuked, because it was through their own fault, that the miracles which God had wrought, and the great favours he had shewn them, had not their proper effect upon them; but they still remained a stubborn, wicked, and ungrateful people, in spite of all he had done to make them otherwise. It requires no great learning, or any thing beyond common sense, to see that this is the right meaning of those words; we must otherwise suppose a very great absurdity; viz. That God upbraids his people with that which was not their fault, but his own doing.

In the same propriety of speech, a master or tutor may say of an idle unteachable pupil; I have taken all possible care, and given him the best instructions, and yet I have given him neither learning nor good

good manners. And who, in that case, does SERM.
not see where the fault lies? Thus again, V.
Matth. xiii. 11. Christ says, *It is given to*
you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of
heaven, but to them it is not given. Not as
if God, with the utmost respect of persons,
gave to some so necessary a gift, and denied
it to others; but 'tis the same as if he had
said; You, who are virtuously inclined,
and will attend, shall attain to that know-
ledge; but they are wicked, and will nei-
ther attend nor know. And this is no
other than what the Prophet Daniel had
said long before; *None of the wicked shall* Dan. xii.
understand, but the wise shall understand. 10.
So that we see, that those things which are
said in scripture to be the gifts of God,
come by natural means, and are the effects
of a man's own industry and virtue. And
seeing God has given the means to all, it
must be every one's own fault, and proceed
from his own negligence, if he does not also
obtain the end, everlasting life.

In temporal things men are not so apt
to mistake, or contend about the meaning
of words. For we generally call riches,
and all our acquisitions, the gifts and fa-
vours of God, as indeed they are; and
yet men do not find fault with their being

SERM. so called, nor cease to labour and mind

V. their business for that reason; they are so foolish in nothing else but their greatest concern. And the reason is; temporal things are near at hand, and may be the object of the fool's diligence; but 'tis peculiar to wise men, to see at a distance, and mind that which is best in the whole. But,

Fourthly, This their being converted from heathenism to christianity, or translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God: which is called *being saved*, because it is the way of salvation; this, I say, is said to be, *Not of works, least any man should boast*. And how true that is, is very plain from what has been already said. For if the Ephesians, as all heathens, were in a helpless condition, and could do nothing for themselves, but God, by his free gift or favour, did every thing for them, they could have no works of their own to boast of, which could create them anew in Christ, any more than they could contribute to their being first created men. For both, one as well as the other, was the workmanship of God, as is said in the very next verse.

2 Tim.
i. 9.

The Apostle writes the same doctrine in the second epistle to Timothy; *God*, says he

he, who hath saved us, and called us with an SERM.
holy calling, not according to our works, but V.
according to his own purpose and grace. There- 

by shewing him that no works, either of the law of Moses, or of nature, which were done, or could be done, by Jews or Gentiles, could procure or merit that gracious covenant, which God made in Christ; but it was according to his own design, through his favour to mankind, that they were so called and made christians. In all this the Apostle says nothing of their final salvation, but only of the way to it; much less does he tell them that that glorious inheritance did not depend upon their own behaviour or good works; for he adds immediately, that God had thus called them, or created them in Christ Jesus for that very purpose, *viz.* To good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. As long as they were dead in trespasses and sins, it was morally impossible that they should lead a holy life; it was not to be expected, but as soon as God had quickened them by the light of the gospel, He then requires of them, as he does of all christians, that they walk in newness of life, or in the practice of good works. So that you see,

SERM. the word *works*, as it stands in my text, has

V. a very different meaning from what it has,
 in the verse following; one signifying such works as no man could perform, and the other, such as God requires of all christians, as the conditions of his favour, and their own salvation. And that God does require such works, I shall, according to my second proposition, shew, by undeniable proofs of holy scripture; and that every particular person's final salvation depends upon his own behaviour, or his good works.

2 Pet.
iii. 16.

It was as early as St. Peter's days, that the difficult parts of St. Paul's epistles, were wrested by unstable men to their own destruction. For so he tells us; and we find it, even to this day, particularly true of the doctrine which I am now speaking of.

Jam. ii.
14.

It was that which stirred up the pen of St. James, to prove that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only: not indeed by any particular good works, but by a uniform or impartial obedience, without any mixture of wilful and presumptuous sin. And he being himself an inspired writer, ought to satisfy every christian reader in that point. But if he does not, that man, whoever he is, instead of saving him-

himself by faith, will shew that he has SERM.
neither faith nor understanding therein. V.

As I have, upon other occasions, spoken 
more largely to that purpose, it may be
sufficient at present, only to add briefly the
following observations :

First, What we have from Christ him-
self ; *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,* Matt. vii. 21.
but he that doeth the will of my Father which
is in heaven. Therefore not every one
who professes or calls upon the name of
Christ, or is called by his name, or is bap-
tised ; not every one who believes the gos-
pel, much less any one who holds that
faith in unrighteousness, shall be saved ;
but he only who doeth or worketh the
will of God. And what that will of God
is, we are abundantly informed ; viz. That
'tis the sanctification of man, his walking
after the Spirit, or in newness of life :
'tis perfecting that holiness in his fear,
without which, no man shall see the Lord.

Secondly, Nor does the assistance of the
Holy Ghost make void our own endea-
vours, or render them needless, any more
than the Lord's keeping the city does the
waking of the watchman. St. Paul makes
use of it as an argument on the contrary.

SERM. For, or because, *God worketh in you, to will and to do, of his own good pleasure; for*

V. *that reason, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; or with that awe and reverence, which is due to the searcher of hearts, who is so near you, as to assist all your endeavours in that most necessary and most important concern.*

Phil. ii.
12, 13.

Thirdly, St. Peter, whose particular design is to instruct us in what is necessary to obtain those great and precious promises, which are given unto us, bids us *add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance, and all other christian graces; and tells us, that they who do not, are blind, and in a way to be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But rather, says he, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.* By which we see, that although a man's salvation is the calling and election of God, yet 'tis his own diligence, which must make it sure.

2 Pet. i.
5—10.

Fourthly, In the Revelations, we are told who those blessed are, who shall obtain everlasting life. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates, into the city. From which city,*

Rev. xxii.

14.

city, all wicked, debauched and deceitful SERM.
people are excluded, of whatsoever faith V.
or profession they may be. Whereas, *doing*
God's commandments gives a man a *right*
to the tree of Life.

It is needless, as well as impracticable, to mention all the particular proofs of holy scripture, for that which is in a manner the sense and design of the whole; but if Christ himself, or his Apostles St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, and St. John, knew the way to eternal salvation, what I have said may abundantly suffice.

But, before I conclude, it may not be amiss to speak a word or two by way of answer to some who object in the following manner; If salvation be of works, how then is boasting excluded, as St. Paul says it is? and that, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. Now to this I answer in a few words;

That by the law of works he means a perfect innocence and obedience, without allowing repentance or remission of sins; which, as no man can perform it, no man can with reason boast of it: but by the law of faith, he means the conditions of the gospel, which (as I have proved) requires good works, or a holy life, as indispensably

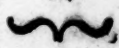
SERM. pensably necessary to salvation, though

V. they cannot be, in a strict sense, the
 ~~~~~ meritorious cause of it, or give any man  
 a reason for boasting. For, if after we  
 have done all that is our duty to do, we  
 are but unprofitable servants, with what  
 pretence can we boast for doing only a  
 part? It much more becomes us to adore  
 that grace and mercy, which, in com-  
 passion to our infirmities, will accept of  
 that part, and reward our sincerity in-  
 stead of our perfection. Such reward  
 cannot be reckoned of debt, but of grace  
 or favour: Nevertheless, as far as it is a  
 reward, so far it supposes merit for the  
 object of it; and therefore the scripture  
 speaks of the worthiness of sincere chris-  
 tians to receive it; and that more or less,  
 in proportion to their deeds or works.

1 Cor. iii.  
8.

This is not such a merit as the papists pre-  
 tend; not any arising from the nature of  
 the works, but from the covenant and pro-  
 mise of God; which gives the performers  
 of that covenant a right to the tree of  
 life. And accordingly Christ says of some  
 Rev. iii. of the church of Sardis; *They shall walk*  
 4. *with me in white, for they are worthy.* And  
 if it pleases him to make use of that term,  
 I think it the best wisdom for christians

to

to do their duty, and endeavour to make SERM.  
themselves worthy, rather than cavil about V.  
words. 

And thus having shewn, that, notwithstanding the grace or favour of God, in reconciling us to himself through Christ, our final salvation depends upon our own endeavours, or good works. I shall conclude by producing the testimony of St. Paul once more; who assures us, that it is not only a *work*, or *labour*, but such a one as *will not be in vain in the Lord*.

1 Cor.  
xv. 58.

The

to the debt, and obedient to the law. V.

~ ~ ~

As the law is the law, that is, the law

standing the grace of God, in

reconciling us to himself through Christ

our final redemption is upon our own

endeavour, or good works. I shall con-

clude by producing the testimony of

Paul the apostle, who shews that it

is not only a law, but a law of love.

One will not be the law in itself, but

the law of love, which is the law of

the Father, and the law of the Son.

And the law of the Son is the law of

the Father, which is the law of love.

And the law of love is the law of the

Father, which is the law of love.

And the law of love is the law of the

Father, which is the law of love.

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And the law of love is the law of the

Father, which is the law of love.

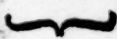
And the law of love is the law of the

Father, which is the law of love.

**The Condemnation of MEN, is their  
love of Darkneſs.**

JOHN iii. 19.

*This is the condemnation, that light is come  
into the world, and men loved darkneſs  
rather than light, becauſe their deeds were  
evil.*

**I** BELIEVE I need not ſpend any SERM.  
time in ſhewing that the words light VI.  
and darkneſs, are here metaphorical,   
as they are in moſt places of ſcripture,  
and ſignify, not ſuch light and darkneſs ;  
as are the objects of our outward ſenſes,  
but the light and darkneſs of the mind,  
the manifeſtation or knowledge of the  
truth, and the contrary ſtate of ignorance  
and error.

The light then which the evangelist,  
ſpeaking in the perſon of Chriſt, affirms  
to be come into the world, is no other than  
the Goſpel ; in which, men are plainly  
taught the method whereby they may be  
reconciled to God ; and live and die in his  
favour,



SERM. favour, if they have but hearts to love and

VI. embrace it. This is otherwise called *the*

*grace of God, which bringeth salvation;*

Tit. ii.

11.

because the motive of sending it, was God's special love and favour to mankind. And the apostle tells us, it has appeared unto all men; not only to philosophers or men of learning, but to all in general who are endued with common sense, and will make use of it; the gospel being an address to the common sense and reason of mankind. For, to deny *ungodliness, and worldly lusts,* and to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,* is what all men may know and practise; and this is what the gospel teaches, and is indeed the whole design of revelation, and the whole duty of man.

Now the more plain and easy the rules of the gospel are, and the more level they lie to common sense, the clearer the light must be; and so the more likely to offend those, whose deeds are evil. And this is too apparently the case at present; men have loved, and still continue to love, darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. *For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

Ver. 23.

The way and means to avoid this light **SERM.**  
has been to raise a mist about it, by dis- **VI.**  
putes concerning unnecessary, intricate and   
undeterminable points; whereby men's  
eyes are taken off from what they might  
otherwise plainly see to be their duty, and  
fixed upon other things, which, at best, are  
but means and motives.

But Satan, who is the prince of darknes,  
taking advantage from men's great love  
of it, has carried on his wicked designs  
with such success, that the holy, the humble,  
pious and charitable man is almost perished  
from the earth, and the disputer come in  
his place; the common discourse of religi-  
on being not concerning what we must do,  
but what we must believe; as if the favour  
of God was to be obtained by reforming  
other men's opinions, rather than our own  
lives.

The topics of true piety, holiness, and  
charity, although they are of the last con-  
cern to us, are neglected, and become des-  
picable, because they admit of no dispute;  
but are so plain, that in them all honest  
and well-meaning men must of necessity  
agree. And because the prince of darknes  
can fetch no obscurity from these, the mi-  
nisters and favourers of darknes have laid  
them

SERM. them aside, and employed themselves more  
 VI. to their own purpose and advantage.

  
 John xv.  
 14.

*Ye are my friends,* says Christ, *if ye do whatsoever I command you*; thereby plainly shewing us the way to his favour. But, instead of this, to dispute about his metaphysical essence, hypostatical union, and other words without any certain meaning, or any meaning at all, has obscurity enough in it to puzzle and divide people to the end of the world.

And although men have been as plainly taught, that they are to work out their own salvation, and render themselves acceptable to God, by being holy as he is holy; yet they have fancied themselves better employed, in enquiring whether are foreknown and predestinated to that purpose; and by making it a question, whether their wills are free to do good, they give us great reason to think they are more free to do the contrary. Others have been solicitous, and waiting for particular or special calls from God, and been so taken up in examining whether their duty is to be done by the strength of nature or of grace, that it has been neglected, and never done at all.

Innumerable are the things of this nature, which have so obscured the true light, that it has served men, not to put off the  
 works

works of darkness, but to put them on SERM.  
with less shame and regret: and the pure VI.  
and unspotted light of the world, is made  
by these means, the minister of darkness  
and sin. For as long as his followers can  
place the main force of their religion in  
being zealous for parties, and their opini-  
ons; and fancy themselves good christians  
because (as they think) they are not here-  
ticks, and judge of other people's charac-  
ters by the same rule; they will, and ex-  
perience shews it to be true, that they have  
but little concern left for the great end of  
their profession, which is an humble, cha-  
ritable and holy life.

But the eager earrying on of disputes,  
and adhering strictly to opinions, is not,  
as it pretends, for the love of truth, but  
rather the contrary; and the greatest zea-  
lots therein are, of all others the greatest  
hereticks, as they voluntarily neglect the  
main thing necessary, and choose to them-  
selves a means of justification very different  
from what the gospel proposes. For by  
this means, instead of propagating chris-  
tian knowledge and practice, they create  
unchristian bitterness and wrath; such  
wrath as works not the righteousness of  
God, but as it springs from carnality, so  
I it



SERM. it tends to the same, and disposes the minds

VI. of men for every temptation of vice and wickedness. And 'tis well known, that the lewdest of the people, if they pretend to any religion at all, are the greatest champions for their own sects, or parties: and in whatsoever they do for that purpose, they applaud themselves as doing God service, and imagine they have merit enough thereby, to make amends for their vices, and obtain a place in heaven, not by preparing themselves for that holy place, but by excluding all others, as far as they are able, both from that and the present world too.

Now, as long as men of learning and discourse are seen to be thus employed in contending for opinions, as if it was the whole or main part of religion, the vulgar or men of lower capacities, are very easily induced to excuse themselves from any concern in it; they are too ignorant for learned and logical disputes, and therefore imagine they have no more to do with religion, than the scholar has with bodily labour, or mechanick employments. And this is in fact, the case of many of them; and many others of more active spirits, but of as great, and more mischievous ignorance,

rance, have made us know that they are SERM. not altogether useless in the works of darkness, but can supply their defect of logick and letters, with rage and clamour; and that in the cause of religion, they can hate, revile, backbite and fix a brand of heresy upon one another, as well as the most able disputant, or writer of controversy that ever was. VI.

Indeed, if the conditions of the gospel were such as did absolutely require a right perception, not only in all the fundamental articles of faith, but in all the branches, subdivisions, and explanations of it, which subtil wits have framed in their opposing one another; I say, if this were the case, the gospel could not be a plain rule of salvation; and not only people of mean capacities would be excluded, but all must in some measure, continue in darkness, and be almost as much to seek for the right way, as they were in the heathen world.

But this is not the case; men have brought these things upon themselves, by a natural dislike to the truth. The conditions of the gospel are plain, and no man can now abide in darkness, but by his love of it, and neglect of the truth; for which

SERM. he must be found guilty at the last day.

VI. *This is the condemnation, that light is come in to the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* In which words, I shall observe with the Evangelist,

First, That light is come into the world, and shew the nature of it, or its great plainness and perspicuity ;

Secondly, Wherein consists the condemnation or guilt of men, *viz.* In the love of darkness or error ; *they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.*

And first, the natural and unalterable difference between moral good and evil ; the being and attributes of God, his love of righteousness and hatred of the contrary, the duty of man to worship him, in hopes of his favour, and fear of his displeasure ; these things, I say, and much more might have been found out, and clearly seen by our natural reason. But then, these things were not so plain, as to be the object of every one's capacity ; especially of such whose calling in the world would hardly allow them time and opportunity for enquiry and observation. Few, even of the Philosophers, or men of learning in the heathen world, did attain to any competent

tent measure of it; not because it was out of their reach (for then they might have been excused, as well as the more ignorant) but because their hearts being vain and corrupt, they did not like to retain and improve such knowledge in their minds. And for this reason, the apostle tells us, *they were without excuse*; as undoubtedly all men must be from the highest to the lowest, who live under the much clearer light of the gospel. For, if the light of nature was sufficient to leave those men without excuse, who might thereby, if they would have attended to it, have attained to the knowledge of God, and their duty; much more will the gospel render those inexcusable, to whom it was preached in a peculiar manner, and for whose sake chiefly it was sent; viz. the poor and unlearned, who wanted those abilities and advantages, which were in the power of other men. And, as it is in fact, so it was highly requisite, that that dispensation of God, which was to bring all men, or men of all ranks and conditions to salvation, should appear unto all men, and be the object of all men's understanding and knowledge.

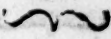
SERM.  
VI.  
Rom. i.  
20.



SERM. Now, that the gospel-dispensation is

VI. *such*, we have sufficient testimony from it  
 ~~~~~ self; for how often does Christ, in his  
 preaching, emphatically repeat that saying,
He that hath ears to hear, let him hear?
 thereby expressing the universal plainness
 and reasonableness of his doctrine, which
 every one might hear, whose ears were
 open, and were disposed for it. As if he
 had said; I speak not to you only who are
 learned in the law, and are able to dispute
 and make long deductions from the nature
 of things, but to every man or woman,
 who is endued with that sense and under-
 standing which is common to mankind; to
 all believers, or all humble, obedient and
 faithful people.

St. Paul speaks of himself and other
 christian preachers, as *using great plainness*
 2 Cor. *of speech*; such as plain men may under-
 iii. 12. stand; very different from those types of
 Moses, which hid the truth, as it were,
 Rom. x. under a veil. And he tells us, that the
 8. word of faith or the gospel, was no diffi-
 cult thing to attain to, or to be far fetched,
 but so near us, as to be *in our mouths, and*
in our hearts; easy both to be explained and
 understood; such as is not strange, but most
 agreeable to our reason, and such as the
 heart

heart of man, when well diſpoſed, cannot SERM.
 but approve of, and dictate from its own VI.
 principles. As an inſtance of this, ſee and 
 conſider that precept of Chriſt; *All things* Matt. vii
whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, 12.
do ye even ſo to them. For underſtanding
 which, we need not go to conſult the opi-
 nions of fathers and doctors, or be prepar-
 ed for it by rules of logick, or mathemati-
 cal erudition; but only with an honeſt
 ſincerity, look into our own hearts, and
 read our own deſires and averſions, in which
 we ſhall find our duty in that point, writ-
 ten in moſt plain and legible characters.
 And yet this, our Saviour tells us, *is the*
law and the prophets; or this is the ſum and
 ſubſtance of what they contain, and is the
 end and deſign of their being ſent. Our
 duty is elſewhere ſummed up in the love of
 God and our neighbour; *on which two com-*
mandments, Chriſt likewise tells us, *hang all* Matt.
the law, and the prophets. And this is that xxii. 40.
 ſame grace of God or goſpel, which has
 appeared unto all men; teaching us, *that*
denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould
live righteouſly, ſoberly and godly, in this pre-
ſent world; which (as I have already ob-
 ſerved) may be the ſubject of every man's
 under-

SERM. understanding and practice, or what all
VI. people may know and do, if they please.

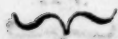
Let no man therefore, although of the meanest capacity, and occupation in the world, think that he shall be excused in the neglect of his duty, as long as it is taught in so plain and easy a manner, and backed with the authority of the word of God. If he is ignorant of it, and continues in any of the works of darkness, after so great light is come into the world; if he lives in debauchery or idleness, in swearing and breaking the sabbath; in malice and hatred, evil-speaking, lying and slander-ing; envying the prosperity of other people, or pursuing his own profit by indirect and sinful means, or any thing notoriously contrary to his christian profession; I say, if this be the case, it will appear in the end, that he was not only ignorant, but that he loved to be so, and did not choose, much less take any pains to be otherwise.

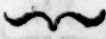
Moreover; as the precepts of christianity are plain and easy to be understood, so are all those articles of belief, which are necessary to the practice of them; such as do not only afford sufficient motives, but encouragements also to support a man in the ways of virtue and godliness, in
spight

ſpight of the oppoſition of a corrupt and SERM.
wicked world. The fundamental doctrines VI.
of repentance from dead works; of faith
towards God, and of the reſurrection of
the dead, and eternal judgment, are not dif-
ficult to be underſtood, by any one who will
diligently attend. Among theſe, St. Paul
inſerts *the doctrine of baptiſms, and laying on* Heb. vi.
of hands, including therein thoſe articles 1, 2.
which were peculiar to chriſtianity, and
required of perſons to be baptized. For,
of thoſe articles, baptiſm was inſtituted
by Chriſt, as a ſeal or pledge of aſſurance;
and the laying on of hands was a ceremo-
ny uſed in conferring the Holy Ghoſt.
Now theſe articles in the Apoſtles time,
were few and eaſy, and profeſſed without
any nice diſtinctions, or metaphyſical diſ-
putes; or elſe, they could not have added
to the Church ſuch numbers as they did,
in one day; among our modern catechiſts,
it would require much more time.

It is not to be thought, that St. Paul here
deſigned a certain catalogue of fundamen-
tals, required of every chriſtian not more or
leſs; for that is impoſſible to be done: and
therefore they are very unreaſonable, who
demand it of us. For as long as men have
different capacities, different opportunities,
and

SERM. advantages, that truth may be fundamental to one man, which is not so to another;

VI.  nothing can be so to any man, which is not within his reach. But, in general, whoever has enough in his creed to induce him to love God with all his heart, and to live according to the plain rules of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to the utmost of his knowledge and abilities; such a one has enough for his own use and purpose, and to answer the ends of christianity. Men may, if they please, according to their capacities, leisure and opportunities, go deeper, and proceed to greater perfection; and 'tis their duty so to do, for their own greater comfort and edification, as well as for that of other men. But then they must do it with humility, and forbearance of one another; and take care that their practice accompany their knowledge; or else, instead of arriving at the perfection of the means, they will overthrow (as much as in them lies) the main end and foundation of all. They must not therefore condemn one another because they see not all things alike; which is a thing no more to be expected, than that all people should be of the same stature

ture or complexion; nor is it any more a SERM. defect, considering the imperfect state of VI. probation, which at present we are in  'Tis the perverseness of the will in following vile affections; or sloth and negligence, in not taking pains to make a just enquiry after truth, which are criminal before God, and not the natural defects of the understanding, or the want of an infallible judgment. But these things will appear more plain, by considering,

Secondly, wherein consists the condemnation, or guilt of men; viz. in the love of darkness, or error; *They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

It is, without doubt, inconsistent with the nature and moral character of God, to require of his people what they are not able to perform; or to know and understand what they cannot comprehend. This, I suppose, may be easily allowed, as being so agreeable to the notions of justice and equity. But I would consider this point farther, and shew that error, when it signifies only being ignorant of, or not seeing the truth, is, upon no occasion, and at no time, at all criminal in itself: men will not be condemned (as the text intimates) for being

SERM. being in darkness, but for their love of it,
VI. for the sake of their evil deeds.

It cannot be denied indeed but that the scripture condemns, and threatens punishment, to ignorance and error; and particularly by the prophet *Isaiah*, saying; *It is*
 1sa. xxvii. *a people of no understanding, therefore he that*
 11. *made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* But, in answer to this, 'tis very plain, both from reason, and the whole tenour of the scripture, that in such places, the effect is put for the cause; and does not signify that God will punish men for being ignorant, but for that wickedness or neglect, which is the cause of it. And thus, when the prophet *Jeremiah* charges the people with great wickedness, in not knowing their God, he expressly tells them, that it was through deceit they refused that knowledge, not through any defect of light or capacity: and therefore, in that deceit, and not in their ignorance, consisted their condemnation or guilt.

What we are to learn from such places of scripture, and what we ought very seriously to consider, is this; that ignorant, unthinking and blockish people will not be excused, but severely punished at
 the

the day of accounts; not for being in that SERM.
miserable condition, but for resting and VI.
abiding in it; and rejecting those means 
of light and instruction which God had
put in their power. And the reason of it
is very plain, as 'tis mentioned in the text;
because their deeds are evil. For they employ
themselves either in hunting for pleasure,
or scraping for wealth, and the pitiful un-
certain favours of this present world; and
if they should, at the same time, give any
competent measure of attention to the
word of God, or to their own reason and
conscience, they must meet with much un-
easiness and regret, as well as many lets or
hindrances in those evil ways, which they
love too well to alter and amend.

Error therefore, considered in itself, may
make a man miserable, and be his punish-
ment (as it always is, when it proceeds
from the love of it) but it can never be
his crime. And accordingly, God is said
to *send strong delusion* as a punishment to
such as receive not the love of the truth;
not by any immediate act of his upon par-
ticular persons, but by fixing a certain con-
nexion between delusion and hatred of the
truth: he has so ordered the nature of
things, that they who love darkness for the

2 Thes.
ii. 11.

SERM. sake of their evil deeds shall be prepared, by

VI. that means, for deceivableness and delusion,
 and be the occasion of their own punishment; or, as the scripture expresses it, that they who reject the counsel of God, and will not abide his reproofs, may *eat of the fruit of their own ways; and be filled with their own devices.*

Prov. i.

31.

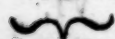
Now, from hence we may learn how much they are mistaken who think to do any good, or to propagate christian light and knowledge, by disputes in things uncertain, or (as the scripture phrase is) *by doubtful disputations*; or by laying the stress of religion in many things to be believed, and persisting obstinately in any human systems of divinity. Such men ought to be infallible themselves, although 'tis rather to be suspected, that while they pretend to see every thing so clearly, they see nothing as they ought. If a man be upright and sincere, and has well laid the foundation of repentance from dead works, and yet errs in some things not easy to be discerned, or not easy to himself; his error does not proceed from the love of darkness, but is altogether free from guilt and condemnation; and will never put him out of

of favour with God. But if he abides in SERM. the works of darkness, he will abide like- VI. wise in the love of it; and it will be to little purpose, to rectify his understanding, as long as his will is perverse. He may be admonished in meekness, to live according to such knowledge, as no christian can ordinarily want; and then peradventure God may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth in other things. Before he is brought thus far, he has no foundation, but is altogether incapable of true christian knowledge, because he only who will do his will, can know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.

Much less can any good be done by uncharitable opposition, and condemning one another. For by too great experience we find what the apostle says to be true, that *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. Without that charity which St. Paul describes in the thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, the utmost eloquence of men, or of angels, in discourse, or the faith of an apostle, such as can remove mountains, will be nothing else but so much mischief in religion; they may serve to kindle wrath, strife, and divisions, and to puff up one against another, rather

Jam. I.
20.

SERM. rather than bring any one to the acknowledgment of the truth.

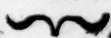


And indeed, one reason why people are so prone to engage in these things, or to make divisions and parties in religion, is to satisfy themselves, that by doing something, as they think, in the cause and interest of it, they appear to be on its side; finding it much easier to shew their zeal by opposition and dispute, than to shew,

Jam. iii. *out of a good conversation, their works with*
13. *meekness of wisdom.*

But, on the contrary, they who in scripture are called the children of light, are distinguished by that peculiar mark of mutual love and forbearance of one another, without which a man cannot love God, or be capable of that charity, which *above*
Col. iii. *all things, is to be put on as the very bond of*
14. *perfectness.* Bitter zeal therefore and contentions about uncertain or doubtful points in religion, being themselves works of darkness, can never help to expel it out of the world, but must very much increase it; and as they proceed from the love of it, they naturally tend to hold people in the same; *for he that loveth not his brother, says*
1 John iii. 14. *St. John, abideth—even in the darkness of death itself.*

To

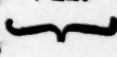
To conclude ; since light is come into SERM. the world, and has appeared unto all men, VI. in order to a righteous and holy life, it  must leave all men, of what condition soever they be, without excuse, who do not comply with the design of it ; but either wholly neglect it, and live in ignorance, or else endeavour to shift it off, by placing other things in its stead. As both these are lovers of darkness, they must necessarily partake of that condemnation, which, according to our Saviour's express words in the text, belongs to all such as *love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

To conclude: there is no doubt
 the world, and has appeared thus all men. VI
 in order to a rightness and help, but it
 must have arisen, of what condition is
 ever they be, without doubt, who do not
 comply with the higher of it, but who
 wholly neglect it, and live in ignorance of
 the order of the world, by placing
 other things in its stead. As both these
 are lovers of darkness, they must necessarily
 partake of that condemnation, which ac-
 cording to our Savior's express words
 the same belongs to all such as see in
 darkness, and say, "I see."

CHRISTIANS must forsake all that
they have.

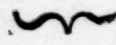
LUKE XIV. 33.

*So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that
forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot
be my disciple.*

THE advantages and rewards of SERM.
christianity being so very great, as VII.
well as the misery and punishment, 
which is threatened to those who shall ne-
glect it; 'tis no wonder that all people are
ready to join in the profession of it, where
there is no apparent danger or difficulty in
so doing. At the first appearance of it in the
world, there was manifest danger in the pro-
fession only; so that few would undertake it,
and such only as had well considered its value,
and prepared themselves to forsake all that
they had, in order to be disciples of Christ.
And for this reason, good and bad men,
were then distinguished by the names of
believers and unbelievers; because it was
very unlikely that they who by faith had

SERM. run the hazard of their lives and fortunes,

VII. for the profession of the gospel, should

 fail in the practice of it. They had already overcome the world; for *who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

1 John

v. 5.

But the case is now very different; men may now profess and pretend to believe, and yet never overcome the world, or have any opposition from it on that account. For in all the pretences of christianity, the greater part of the christian world will join with any one, as far as they are in fashion, and never fall out with him for his profession, 'till he begins strictly and impartially to put it in practice.

The distinction therefore at present, is not between believers, and unbelievers, but between real christians on one side, and atheistical, debauched, superstitious and hypocritical pretenders on the other. And these last being a great majority, 'tis now as necessary for a disciple of Christ, to forsake all that he has, as it was formerly among Jews or heathens. For although it is not now, nor ever was the duty of a christian to forsake all that he has, when he has no particular call for it; or absolutely to hate his nearest relations, or his
own

own life, yet so many offences continually SERM.
arise, from the corrupt practices, and op- VII.
position of a wicked world, that it is not
possible he should maintain his real character, unless he is prepared in heart and affections, to part with the dearest things, for the love of God, and fully resolved at all hazards, to walk before him in truth, and with a perfect heart. Thus we have it in the words of the text; *So likewise whosoever be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* And upon these words, I shall now discourse.

First, by shewing the intent or design of them, as they stand in this place, and have relation to the parables immediately going before; that it is not to discourage us from the profession of christianity, but to exhort every one, to sit down and consider in earnest, what they must do, or may suffer in that most important affair; and,

Secondly, By laying before you, some more particular considerations, which may be of use for that purpose.

The neglect of this, and not duly considering that the advantages of the gospel are pearls of great price, not to be purchased but with all a man has, is certainly

SERM. one great occasion, why so many christians fail

VII. in the practice of their duty, and are apt to
 be seduced by the least appearance of self-denial, or danger in their temporal affairs; as if the interest of piety, and the favour of God were the last things to be secured; or that the doctrine of Christ being inverted, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, should be added to all such as make the present world the chief concern of their lives.

Now, if to obviate this mischief, our Saviour had only bid us, in plain terms, consider seriously the great importance and difficulty of the affair, before we took up the pretences of christianity; his authority might have been sufficient to convince us, that it is our wisdom as well as duty so to do. But he rather condescends to treat with us, according to our own natural principles, and to enforce his doctrine, by appealing to the common sense and usages of mankind; there being hardly any man so rash and foolish, as to undertake any thing of importance, in his temporal affairs, before he has well weighed, and considered his own abilities to go through with it; and whether the advantages in view, are sufficient to answer all the cost and damages he must sustain in the undertaking. And this our Saviour does by two

parables, to which the words of my text SERM.
have relation, and are the conclusion of VII.
the whole. *For which of you intending to* Ver. 28.
build a tower, sitteth not down first, and count-
eth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish
it?—Or, what king, going to make war Ver. 31.
against another king, sitteth not down first, and
consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand
to meet him that cometh against him with
twenty thousand? Notwithstanding it is ve-
ry true, (as St. Peter says) that it would 2 Pet. ii.
be better for people not to have known the way 21.
of righteousness, than after they have known
it to turn from the holy commandment; or ne-
ver to have named the name of Christ un-
less they depart from iniquity: as we must
own, it would be better for a man, not to
have begun building unless he finish his
work; or, for a king not to have gone to
war unless he conquers; yet we must not
understand these similitudes as if it were
left to our choice, whether we will begin
to be christians or no. For although in
temporal affairs, it may be our wisdom to
desist from great undertakings, when we
suspect our own strength, yet in respect to
our heavenly calling it is not so; the case is
very different and can never be the same.
We are forewarned indeed that we have a

SERM. world of potent enemies to encounter, but

VII. these cannot be invincible, as long as *be*
that is in us, is greater than be that it is in
 1 Joh. iv. *the world.* We are told too, that *we are*

4.
 2 Cor. iii. *not sufficient of ourselves,* but at the same
 5. *time, that our sufficiency is of God.* And if

we will sit down first, and count what
 Jude 70. *will be the cost, in building up ourselves upon*

our most holy faith, we cannot doubt of
 our abilities; for whatsoever it may be, it
 is not more than we have, as we may ga-
 ther from the words of the text; *Whosoever*
be of you, that forsaketh not all that he
hath, he cannot be my disciple. But if it be
 plain, and evident to common sense, that
 a man must make a very bad bargain in
 gaining the whole world, by the loss of his
 soul; it cannot but be a very good one to
 forsake all that little we have, if so much
 should be required, for the salvation of it.
 And methinks, I need not use many words
 to persuade you that that inestimable gift
 of God, eternal life (setting aside the
 dreadful evils on the other part) is worth
 all our pains and cost, and a very ample
 reward for all the dangers, difficulties,
 self-denials, fears and disquietudes we can
 possibly undergo to obtain it. Let St.
 2 Cor. iv. 17. Paul remind you, that *our light affliction*
which

Christians must forsake all that they have.

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which is but for a moment, worketh for us a SERM.
far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. VII.

We cannot therefore suppose that our Saviour, by bidding us sit down first and consider, did in reality put it to our choice, whether we would be his disciples or no; or that he had the least design to discourage so necessary an undertaking. For when eternal life is in view, what person in his senses, can choose but lay hold of it? It is the want of such consideration only, or not placing it in a proper light, which is apt to stop us in our beginnings or first works, as it too often does in our progress or perseverance. But then; this caution is otherwise very good, and the practice of it, is necessary for these two reasons: First, to set us upon a proper guard; for, as in fact we are to meet with great opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil, those enemies which we renounce at our baptism; 'tis highly necessary that we be apprised of it before hand, and consider well in what particular manner, they will set upon us, that we may not be taken unawares, or unprepared, in a conflict of so great importance. And for this reason, we are often called upon to watch and pray, that by habitual
prayer

SERM. prayer and meditation, we may have in
 VII. readiness wherewith to resist those particular temptations, which are most likely to beset us. And without doubt, among those who have any sincerity at all in their profession, the neglect of thus preparing themselves, is the greatest occasion of their falling in time of temptation. For, notwithstanding the mere force of temptation may prevail upon a man, to venture upon sin, and act against his own conscience, when 'tis grown weak by neglect; yet it is not likely he should comply with it, if at that time, he had in view all those arguments to the contrary, with which he may be supplied from his christian faith. So that we may conclude that in all sin, there is not only lust and concupiscence, but a great mixture also of ignorance or inadvertency, *i. e.* either a man is wholly ignorant of, or does not call to mind, those strong reasons, which might oher wise determine his will, and secure his innocence.

Secondly, this caution is necessary to acquaint us, not only with the strength of our enemies; but also with our own weakness and insufficiency: and to take off that conceit of themselves, which men are apt to entertain, when dangers and temptations are

are at a distance, or before they are tried. SERM.

We cannot suppose that St. Peter was the VII.

most faint-hearted of the disciples, or that

he wanted zeal and courage in his master's

cause, for he gave a manifest proof of the

contrary; or that his resolution not to deny

him, was not hearty, and sincere; but he

considered not his own weakness, and that

was the chief occasion of his fall. Had he

been more diffident of himself, and, instead

of saying peremptorily, *though I should die*

with thee, yet will I not deny thee; he had said,

Lord be thou my helper, and I shall not

deny thee; in all likelihood, he, who dared

resist a band of armed men, would not have

been baffled by the voice of a servant maid:

or at least, he would not have been so indis-

creet, as to have run into temptation. But

this example we have upon record, that it

might be a warning to all such as make no

scruple to take up the name of Christ, and

consider not what they do. They will not

indeed deny him in words, to which they

have no temptation, but in confidence of

the name only, support their pretensions,

without any proper application to God

for his assistance, or making use of those

remedies, which he has provided for their

weakness. They are whole, and need not

SERM. a physician; they see no necessity for

VII. watching, praying and fasting, or any discipline of self-denial, although the gospel proposes such things as are generally, if not always necessary for the christian life. And thus being left to themselves, they eat the fruit of their own ways; and while they superstitiously bow to the mere name of Jesus, deny his authority habitually, if not every day of their lives.

And what is more likely to prevent this, than a serious consideration that, as the promises of the gospel are glorious and infinitely desirable; so they, like other valuable things, are not to be acquired but by a proportionable industry and application; the best nature, and most virtuous disposition, howsoever forward they may be in hearing the word with joy, and forming resolutions of obedience, yet without the discipline of religion, are too weak to hold out always; and therefore such good sort of people are apt to receive the gospel, like seed sown among rocks; they have no root in themselves, but are soon offended at those difficulties which they necessarily meet in their practice, and which they did not think of, nor prepare against.

When

When Joshua had brought the children ^{SERM.} of Israel into the promised land, he seems ^{VII.} to put it to their choice, whether they would serve the Lord their God, or the idols of the heathens; *Choose you, this day,* ^{Jos. xxiv.} *whom ye will serve;* not as if it were a ^{15.} thing indifferent, for he had before exhorted them, by many arguments, to adhere stedfastly to the true God: but knowing their great proneness to idolatry, he uses this method, as the most likely to prevail upon them so to do, when they were obliged to it, not only by custom and authority, but by their own choice and resolutions. And when, with great forwardness and zeal, they made answer; *God forbid, that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods,* he gives them a very extraordinary check, by saying; *Ye cannot serve the Lord,* ^{Ver. 19.} *for He is a holy God, He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.* But by this, he did not mean that the service of God was impracticable, but to put them in mind, and give them warning, that it was attended with difficulties and temptations: nor had he a design to drive them from their purpose, but to strengthen them, and confirm them in it; that their resolutions of obedience might have

SERM. have some better foundation than their
 VII. present good humour and disposition, arising from their late success, and the visible manifestation of God's protection over them.

The same also is evidently the design of Christ (of whom Joshua was a type) by the words of the text, and the parables going before; not to discourage the least or weakest of mankind; Not to *break the bruised reed*, or *quench the smoking flax*, but to warn us all of our own weakness, and the difficulties we undertake, when we begin upon a christian life; that we may be so wise, as to consider and fortify ourselves against them before hand; without which, it is not likely, it is not possible we should overcome the world, or finish our work.

Matt. xii. 20. *Therefore, as the son of Sirach says, My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.*

Eccles. ii. 1.

This may suffice to shew us the design of Christ, in giving us this caution, as well as the necessity of putting it in practice. In order to which, I come now,

Secondly, To offer some more particular considerations, which may be of use for that purpose. It is not possible to take particular notice of every offence, which

which may meet and oppose a man in the SERM.
progress of a christian life. They are VII.
numberless; and vary, not only according
to a man's particular place, condition, or
employment in the world, but also to his
peculiar temper and inclinations; those
passions and affections, which are predo-
minant, and most likely to get the better
of his reason and faith. But, as this life
is a state of probation, it seems necessary
that all should be tried: and as the provi-
dence of God has so ordered the world,
that no condition of life is free from temp-
tation, 'tis necessary that every one, in re-
gard to particulars, should consider and
provide for himself; because he being best
acquainted with his own affairs, can best
foresee what temptations are most likely to
beset him. In times of peace, I believe,
many well disposed christians are apt to
imagine that they can forsake all, and
lay down their lives, as many martyrs have
done, rather than make shipwreck of their
faith, because 'tis their highest wisdom so
to do; and when no danger appears, they
have little or no check on the other side.
But if such people are not able to with-
stand those temptations of profit or plea-
sure, which frequently occur to all men
more

SERM. more or less; if, for the sake of present

VII. ease or security, they suffer themselves to

be seduced from the strictness of their christian duty, they know not themselves, and are very ill prepared for the time of greater temptations. On the contrary; as

Ecclus. xix. 1. he who contemneth small things, must fall by little and little, so whosoever, in an evil and adulterous generation, can lead a holy christian life, with patience and self-denial, and maintain his integrity in spight of all offences, is as much a witness for the cause of Christ, as he who dies at the stake for the profession of his name, or truth. In order therefore to a steady perseverance in so happy a state, let us sit down and consider,

First, that every christian must take the scriptures for the rule of his life, and not the examples of the world, or the practices of men of the same condition, place or occupation. Among these he may find custom or example, for many things contrary to his profession, and many more which are extremely prejudicial to it; even every thing to which he may be tempted, by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the

the pride of life. And this is a good reason, why the peculiar people of God are commanded *not to follow a multitude to do evil.* A precept very much to be observed; and so much the more, for that the multitude are composed, not only of people notoriously wicked, but of many hypocrites; who, by observing some parts of their duty, would persuade themselves and others, that they are as good as the best; and by that means are more plausible examples to be followed in what they do amiss; and the form of godliness, when thus separate from the power of it, becomes a greater scandal to religion than impiety professed. But how ridiculous is it for a man of reason, to shrink from the true spirit of his profession to comply with the genius of a corrupt age? or to neglect that which he acknowledges should be the rule of his life, to follow the customs of that world which he has formally renounced? 'Tis a very mean excuse for a christian, who should be prepared to forsake all that he has, to say; I must do this or that, as others do, or I cannot live. This, as common as it is, is a direct denial of Christ's authority, and voiding at once all the power and influence which a man's faith ought to have

SERM.
VII.
Exod.
xxiii. 2.

L

upon

SERM. upon his life and conversation. 'Tis an

VII. impious and hard saying of worldly men,
 as it charges God with setting us a rule to walk by, in which he is either unable or unwilling to support us. And moreover 'tis very rarely or never true; but they who make such excuses, express only their own faithless fears, that they shall not live in that plenty and splendour which they inordinately desire, nor be able to keep pace with other men, who allow themselves great latitudes in promoting their own profit or preferment. But if we have that poverty of spirit which is necessary to entitle us to the kingdom of heaven, we shall not be greatly solicitous for our present condition, provided we can but live in the favour of God. We shall be prepared

Eccclus. ii.

4.

for that counsel of the son of Sirach; *Whatsoever is brought upon thee, take chearfully, and be patient, when thou art changed to a low estate.*

But here we must consider further; that we have not only our own passions and affections, our desires and inclinations to contend with, but we must expect a more formidable opposition from the shame and fear of the world. We have warning of this both from the words and exam-

example of Christ. *If the world hate you, SERM. ye know that it hated me before it hated you. VII.*

And the occasion of this hatred, he tells us in another place; *because, says he, I testify* ^{John xv. 18.} *of it, that the works thereof are evil.* Every ^{John vii. 7.}

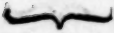
sincere disciple of this master, will consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; and be one of those, of whom St. Paul says, that *in the* ^{Phil. ii. 15.}

midst of a crooked and perverse nation, they shine as lights in the world. And as such lights are a more galling reproof to hypocrisy than any words can be, he must expect the hatred of all those who love darkness rather than light. Thus, in the book ^{Wis. ii. 12.}

of Wisdom, we find these lovers of darkness expressing their thoughts of a righteous man; *He upbraideth us with offending the law, and objecteth, to our infamy, the transgressions of our education.—He was made* ^{Ver. 14. 15.} *to reprove our thoughts; He is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion: we* ^{16.} *are esteemed of him as counterfeits.*

Now, when this is the case, such people are engaged, in their own defence, to discredit every instance of holiness, which they will not practise; and therefore, if they

SERM. cannot examine and prove the meekness

VII. and patience of a just man, by torture,  they seldom fail to do it, with despitefulness and reproach. And, as popery, enthusiasm, phanaticism, preciseness, and hypocrisy have all some resemblance of that holiness to which they pretend, the fairest characters cannot always escape the imputation of some of these: So that, if a christian cannot well be represented as a breaker of the sabbath, a wine-bibber, or a friend of publicans and sinners; there will never be wanting a name of reproach, among men who have a great majority on their side. And truly, how great soever the difference between the form of godliness and the power of it may be in itself, it is such as is not always to be discerned by hypocrites, either in themselves or others; as the foolish virgins were not distinguished from the wise till the time of trial, when 'twas too late. But, as the son of Sirach says again; *observe the opportunity, and beware of evil; and be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul: for there is a shame that bringeth sin.* And as this is very true, that shame has a moral corrupting power over us, so likewise 'tis as necessary that we be prepared against the danger we are in from

Ecclus.
iv. 20.

Christians must forsake all that they have.

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from our fears. For, as Solomon says, *the fear of man bringeth a snare.* The fear of offending such as are in power or authority, or any others upon whom our present welfare or subsistence depends; the danger of sinful compliances for fear of present loss or inconvenience; or of being wearied out by the continual troubles brought upon us by the oppressions, unjust dealings, and cunning contrivances of worldly and designing men; these, and many such like, are so many temptations which lie in wait to oppose our progress, or, at least, to draw us aside from the sincerity of a christian life. For, although *the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers*; yet 'tis manifest that the providence of God does not always appear on the side of virtue, but often leaves the righteous man to be tried by many disappointments, vexations and afflictions, from the iniquity of those among whom he lives. And it must be acknowledged, that in this conflict, there is need of the whole armour of God; all the *patience, and faith of the saints.*

SERM.

VII.

Pro. xxix.

25.

1 Pet. iii.

12.

Rev. xiii.

10.

But before I conclude, I must not forget to mention that extensive charity, or love of enemies, which is so peculiar to the

SERM. christian profession, and by which it is dis-

VII. tinguished from all other institutions of

religion that ever were. *I say unto you, love*

Luke vi.

27.

your enemies. Too great experience may convince us, that in this, there is a difficulty to be overcome. For notwithstanding it appears supported by supreme authority, the strongest reasons, and the brightest examples; yet, among the generality even of christians, it seems to have no better reception than if it was merely dogmatical, and no more to be regarded, than some of the unreasonable, and impracticable doctrines of the Stoicks or other philosophers. I have not time, nor is it my business, on this occasion, to shew the reasonableness of every christian duty; but, as it may be of use in preparing against this particular difficulty, I shall shew, in a few words, that it does not lie so much in the thing itself, as in the want of due attention to, and faith in, the word of God. As for such as have pleasure in mere revenge, and take all those for enemies who stand in their way, or give them any disgust, whether right or wrong, and even return evil for good; to them I have nothing to say; but I speak to those, who have better ears to hear. And these I would have

have consider, that we may learn from SERM.
scripture, as well as from the nature of VII.
things, that God, who has made every
thing uniform, or answerable to itself, has
fixed an inseparable connexion between
sin and misery, in which he will not be
mocked or disappointed, but *whatsoever* Gal. vi.
a man sows, that shall he also reap. And if 7.
we add to this, that the hairs of our head
are all numbered, and therefore the pro-
vidence of God cannot be unconcerned in
the smallest of our affairs; we may be
sure that no one can do us any real injury,
great or small, but he must, sooner or later,
repent that he has done it; and conse-
quently, to a merciful man, must be an
object of compassion rather than revenge.
Under the greatest injuries, most people
seem to be sensible of this truth, it being
esteemed a very commendable thing, to
pity and pray for those who unjustly take
away our lives: and yet, in smaller matters,
perhaps merely accidental, and no injuries
at all, men will not be persuaded, that 'tis
for their own praise as well as duty, to be-
have in the same manner.

But this *is* not to act according to rea-
son, but, as the apostle justly calls it, *a*
giving place to the devil, the great enemy

SERM. of all that is reasonable; of all that is
 VII. lovely and of good report. The truth
 of the matter is; men are conscious to
 themselves of many faults and failings,
 for which they hope they shall not suffer,
 nor be called to account; and therefore
 are apt to imagine that, unless they inter-
 pose, their enemy may pass altogether un-
 regarded, and never be made sensible of
 the wrong he has done. And hence it is,
 that the smallest affronts are often known
 to stir up the greatest wrath and implaca-
 bility; while men proceed impatiently,
 as if they would assist the providence of
 God, and supply its deficiencies in this
 present imperfect state. But he that be-
 lieves in earnest, and attends to the gospel,
 can never act in such a manner. For
 notwithstanding all sins may be forgiven,
 yet Christ assures us, *that every idle word*
that men shall speak, they shall give account
thereof in the day of judgment. And if so,
 it cannot be unreasonable that we, who
 have so much to be forgiven, should de-
 sire, endeavour, and pray, that all who
 partake of the same nature with ourselves
 may be prepared to make a happy account;
 unless it can be thought an addition to
 our own happiness, to see others miserable.

Matt. xii.
 36.

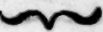
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In a word ; if these and many other con-
siderations, which we may gather from
our own reasoning, and the rules of our
profession, will not prevail to make us easy
in the love of God and our neighbour, we
must be left among those unreasonable
fools, who reject the favour and example
of that Lord and master who died for his
enemies, to indulge their own peevishness
and pride ; and (what is worse) to gratify
the devil, who is a worse enemy than any
mortal man can be.

To conclude this discourse : Since God
is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all
his works ; there can be nothing in his
commandments, either unreasonable or
impracticable ; nor can any thing hinder
us from pressing toward the mark for the
prize of our high calling of God in Christ
Jesus, but our own indolence, or inordi-
nate love of the world. Whatever diffi-
culties there are, God has made ample
provision against them, or he would never
have laid them in our way. St. Paul ap-
plies the promise made to Joshua, to all
faithful christians ; *I will never leave thee,*
nor forsake thee. And shall we then be such
fools as to leave Him ? Rather, let us join
with the same apostle, and say ; *I am per-*
suaded,

SERM.

VII.



Pf. cxlv.

17.

Heb. xiii.

5.

Rom. viii.

28.

SERM. *suaded, that neither death nor life, nor an-*
VII. *gels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things*
present, nor things to come; nor height, nor
depth, nor any other creature, shall be able
to separate us from the love of God, which is
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ESAU,

ESAU, or the cunning hunters.

HEB. xii. 16, 17.

Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right.

17. *For ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

BY the words, *Ye know*, St. Paul sup-
poses the Hebrews to be well ac-
quainted with that history of Esau, SERM. VIII.
which we have in the book of Genesis, it
being frequently read in their synagogues;
and therefore it could not but be very
shameful, as well as faulty, for them to be
ignorant of it. And much more will it
be so for christians, who have the Bible
in their hands, and are told that the
things contained therein are of the last
concern; no less than that word of God,
by which their final happiness or misery
must

SERM. must be determined. Such negligence and
 VIII. contempt of the favour of God, can have
 ~~~~~ no excuse, but must undoubtedly end  
 in that fruitless and late repentance, of  
 which Esau's is a type or representation.  
 I say, a type or representation; for what is  
 here said of Esau's being rejected, does not  
 concern his future state in the next world  
 (as some have thought) but the earthly in-  
 heritance of him and his posterity; which  
 he lost by selling his birth-right for one  
 morsel of meat; and the history of it is  
 given us for a warning, that they who are  
 now so foolish, as to change their share in  
 the gospel for the pleasures of sin, may  
 not flatter themselves, but be assured,  
 that, when the blessings therein promised  
 are bestowed, they shall then be rejected.

I believe there is hardly any one who  
 will not acknowledge, that the folly of  
 Esau was very great in selling his birth-  
 right at so vile a rate; and yet, every  
 thoughtless impenitent sinner is doing the  
 same thing, only with this difference; that  
 his infatuation, and the damage he must  
 suffer by it, is as much greater, as that  
 inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,  
 which is reserved in heaven for us, is more  
 valuable than any earthly possessions, or  
 any

any happiness therein can be. The folly SERM.  
indeed, in it's nature, is the same on both VIII.  
sides, and consists in parting with an infi-  
nitely better inheritance in reversion, for  
something at present, which is a mere trifle,  
or, in comparison, nothing at all. For  
this is what every voluptuous, ambitious,  
or worldly man does ; every dilatory im-  
penitent sinner, who puts off his repent-  
ance for the present gratification of his  
lusts, or to indulge himself in his own in-  
dolence and want of thought. To expose  
this folly, the apostle puts the Hebrews in  
mind of the history of Esau, by which it  
is represented as justly as great things can  
be by small ; together with that miserable  
consequence of it ; *He found no place of  
repentance, though he sought it carefully  
with tears.*

In the following discourse, I shall en-  
deavour to make some improvements, by  
a more particular application of this case  
of Esau, to that of impenitent sinners.

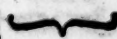
And first, The birth-right, which Esau  
parted with in so vile a manner, had ma-  
ny privileges annexed to it ; such as the  
priesthood, as some have supposed, with  
a double portion of his father's goods ;  
the temporal promises made to Abraham  
and



SERM. and his seed ; which, upon his despising  
 VIII. his birth-right, were fulfilled in the poster-  
 ~~~~~ rity of Jacob ; and, in short, they were  
 such as no earthly advantages could well
 be conceived more valuable.

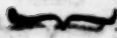
The antetype, or things represented by
 these, are the privileges of every christian ;
 the promises of God made to us in Jesus
 Rom. viii. Christ. We are, says the apostle, *heirs of*
 17. *God, and joint heirs with Christ.* Good
 christians are, in this chapter, called *the*
assembly or church of the first born, written
in heaven ; and their inheritance is the
 Col. i. *inheritance of the Saints in light.* It is an
 12. exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; and
 that which must of necessity put an im-
 mense value upon it, is, that 'tis incor-
 ruptible and undefiled, and fades not away,
 2 Cor. but is *eternal in the heavens.* In that place,
 v. 1. where *the righteous shall shine forth, as the*
 Matt. xiii. *sun in the kingdom of their Father ; and*
 43. where their happiness shall be without
 mixture. For *they shall hunger no more,*
 Rev. vii. 16. *neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun*
light on them, nor any heat. But God shall
wipe away all tears from their eyes. And
 xxi. 4. *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow*
nor crying ; neither shall there be any more
pain ; for the former things are passed away.

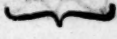
Thus

Thus we see, that, as the things which SERM.
Esau was entitled to by his birth-right VIII.
were the greatest of all earthly blessings; 
so the claim which every christian has by
God's promises in the gospel, consists in
that which is absolutely the greatest of all;
the most consummate happiness in na-
ture; such as eye hath not seen, nor ear
heard, nor has it entered into the heart
of man.

Secondly, It may be worth while to en-
quire, how it comes to pass, that either
the one or the other can be capable of
making so foolish an exchange; such as
they themselves who actually do it can-
not but admire at, and disclaim; when con-
sidered in the person of another. For the
more we are acquainted with this pitiable
folly, the further we can dive into this
depth of Satan, the less liable we shall be
to be guilty of it.

The history informs us that *Esau was a* Gen. xxv.
cunning hunter, and a man of the field; by ^{27.}
which, and that particular act in selling
his birth-right, we may imagine his cha-
racter; and very well suppose him to have
been a person wholly intent upon his pre-
sent pleasures and enjoyments; too incon-
siderate to have any regard to his future
good,

SERM. good, or that of his posterity: but, being
VIII. very much addicted to the sports of the
 field, he had acquired a great skill in hunt-
ing; and by his venison, obtained the love
and fondness of his aged Father. Upon
these things, no doubt, he valued himself,
and despised the life of his brother, *who*
was a plain man. The reflection upon his
own skill and usefulness, made him over-
look his follies, and his great neglect of
the main chance. For, had he in the least
but turned his thoughts that way, he
might have known the value of his birth-
right as well as his brother. Which, if he
did know, 'tis certain he did not duly weigh
and consider it as he ought, and as a wise
man would; but, like a fool, he parted
with it as a thing of no value, for a trifle,
and satisfied the small remonstrances of
his reason, by a more trifling excuse. He
came from the field hungry and faint, and
from thence took occasion to say; Behold
I am at the point to die; and what pro-
fit shall this birth-right do to me? 'Tis
certain that hunger unrelieved will be the
death of any man; but this could not be
his case, in his father's house, which
abounded with wealth; where he might
otherwise have provided for himself, and
perhaps

perhaps the ſame ſort of food, which he SERM.
eagerly and inordinately deſired. But the VIII.
caſe was; he had then a craving appetite, 
which ſo far engroſſed his whole attention
as to ſet him upon a reſolution of ſatisfy-
ing it at any rate. Thus Eſau deſpiſed his
birth-right, and never repented of what
he had done till it was too late. For,
without any remorse, he eat and drank,
and roſe up, and went his way. And 'tis
to be obſerved, that that very hunting,
upon which he valued himſelf, was the
occaſion of the temptation, and his being
led into the ſnare.

Now, there is ſuch a reſemblance be-
tween this folly, and that of impenitent
finners, that 'tis no wonder the apoſtle
choſe to repreſent one by the other. For,
if we compare the eternal inheritance,
with the bleſſing which Eſau loſt, and
obſerve the proportion of the difference,
we ſhall find that the things for which
they ſell that inheritance, will hardly a-
mount to the value of one morſel of meat.
Nor does this reſemblance hold only in
the general notion of their folly, in part-
ing with an immense treaſure in reverſion,
for a preſent trifſe, but in the particular
progreſs and operation of it. For 'tis
M certain,

SERM. certain, that the men of this world are,
 VIII. like Esau, too intent upon their present
 profits and pleasures, to have a due regard
 to futurity. They are, as St. Peter ob-
 serves, *blind and cannot see far off*. Tem-
 poral things are near at hand, and there-
 fore appear great and valuable in their
 eyes; but the things that are eternal,
 being as far distant as another life, have
 not power to attract their attention or
 esteem. And are not all these, in their
 several degrees, cunning hunters for the
 game of this world? do they not make it
 the chief design and business of their
 lives? do they not value themselves upon
 their skill and success, and by the ad-
 vantages they make, obtain the favour
 of the world, whose children they are?
 This makes them look down upon, and
 despise the life of the plain and pious man,
 which, according to the book of Wisdom,
 they will hereafter confess and say; *We*

Wis. v. 4 *fools counted his life madness*. But further,

As the darling employment of Esau's
 life prepared him for temptation, and led
 him into the snare, so it happens to the
 cunning hunters of a vain world. The
 prophet says; *It is from the Lord, that the*
people weary themselves for very vanity; or
 it

it is He, who has so ordered the nature of SERM.
things, that they who pursue vanity, shall VIII.
weary themselves. Hence therefore they 
become, in the apostle's language, *weary
and faint in their minds*; their reason and
conscience being often baffled, grow weak
and unable to exert their natural force, but
are enslaved to appetite and passion; so that
'tis morally impossible, that they should have
any real virtue, or such as is uniform and
steady; but must be prepared to comply
with any temptation that comes in their
way. If it was not so with these cunning
hunters of riches and honour; temporal
advantages could never so far prevail as
to make a man forget his country, his
God, and his own soul: nor could the
pitiful gains, which are made by cheating,
lying, or breach of trust, among traders,
and men of business, be preferred before
the hopes of an eternal treasure in heaven.
No certainly; to act in so weak a manner,
is the part of a hunger-starved soul, im-
patiently longing for vanity, or things
which satisfy not.

And thus we see, that by a vicious in-
clination to the present world, and little
or no care for futurity, men enfeeble their
minds, and being faint in respect of virtue,

SERM. are drawn into that extreme folly, of
 VIII. which Esau's selling his birth-right is a
 ~~~~~ type. We do not read in the history,  
 that he was a fornicator, nor does the  
 apostle say, that he was guilty of that, or  
 any particular sin, or propose him as an  
 example of it, but puts us in mind, by  
 way of warning, that fornicators and all  
 other profane persons, who sell themselves  
 to work wickedness, are infatuated as he  
 was, and make the same foolish bargain  
 as he did. *Lest there be any fornicator, or  
 profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel  
 of meat, sold his birth-right.* Perhaps for-  
 nication is pointed at, in a particular  
 manner, as it leads men into profaneness,  
 and contempt of holy things; or as  
 bearing a nearer resemblance to this exam-  
 ple of folly. It is like it indeed, in that  
 hungry and vicious appetite by which it  
 is conducted, as well as in the short and  
 momentary gratification of it. A man  
 under its power, cannot duly reflect,  
 so as to discern the sad consequence of  
 what he is about; but is hurried on, as  
*an ox goeth to the slaughter, and knoweth  
 not that it is for his life.* And, as Esau  
 could not satisfy himself with any thing  
 but his brother's mess, so, 'tis well known  
 8 that

that the fornicator has the same vicious SERM.  
appetite to what is another's man's right; VIII.  
and generally, the plain man is chosen,  
not only to be defrauded, but made the  
object of ridicule; such fools never con-  
sidering, that there is, besides the plain  
man, an invisible supplanter, who is a  
subtle serpent, as well as a roaring lion,  
and a more cunning hunter than them-  
selves.

But, as long as there is any remorse of  
conscience left, men will be framing ex-  
cuses, as the fool in the text did; who  
would fain have persuaded himself, that  
what he did, was to save his life. And  
in like manner, these men are apt to  
imagine that their pleasures are natural,  
and necessary for their happiness, and that  
they cannot live without them; thereby  
reflecting upon God himself, as if he en-  
vied us, and had not stocked the world  
with variety of innocent pleasures and di-  
versions, sufficient to support a reasonable  
man under the burthen of this present life.

But He, who could prepare a table in  
the wilderness, does not deny his servants  
any manner of thing that is truly good;  
and therefore to say that forbidden things  
are necessary, is one of those hard speeches,



SERM. which ungodly sinners have spoken against  
VIII. him, but can be no excuse for themselves.

It is very true, that a man's natural desires indulged too far, may make him very miserable, if they are not satisfied; and from hence it is, that passion and appetite acquire strength, and become irresistible to such as will not take any pains to subdue and keep them under. But for that purpose, God has endued us with reason and a reflexive faculty, not to extirpate those lively springs of nature, but to controul and reduce them, when they are inordinate, to their proper use and service. And howsoever difficult this may seem, there is less trouble, anxiety, and disturbance of natural rest in it, than there is in a licentious gratification of them: so that he who is too lazy and indolent to maintain the superiority of his better part, takes the most pains; and, in the mean time, becomes a traitor to his own liberty, and the salvation of his soul.

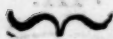
Thirdly, We come now to the fatal consequence of this folly: *He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

We may suppose that Esau persisted in his way of life, as profane sinners do, and  
was

was too intent upon his sports to reflect SERM.  
upon what he had done, or make any VIII.  
amends by repentance, 'till the time was  
past. The same carelessness and inconsideration, which led him into his folly, supported him in it, 'till the blessing was disposed of, though it was many years after. Or perhaps, if he did at all reflect, he could not be persuaded that the selling of his birth-right would rob him of his father's blessing, of whose love he had so great assurance. Thus he went on securely, and would not be convinced 'till the truth was forced upon him, and he began, with sorrow and confusion, to cry with a great and exceeding bitter cry; and is now become a general type of folly to all those whom nothing will convince but their own irretrievable misery and punishment.

And this is indeed the case of all careless and presumptuous sinners, as the apostle intimates in the text; they spend their lives in a wild extravagant chase after the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world; neglect the discipline of themselves; stifle the remonstrances of reason and conscience, and lose even the power to consider what they do. And thus are they carried on to the end; to that time

SERM. when they must believe and repent, whether they will or no; when 'tis too late,

VIII. 

and there is no room or place left for repentance. Whether this be at the day of death, or of judgment, is not very material; it is certain that in the end, they must feel the sad consequence, and groan under the conviction of their own folly, when, in vain, they begin to cry; *Lord, Lord, open unto us; or, in despair, to say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.*

Rev. vi.  
16.

Let every dilatory impenitent sinner consider this, and take warning while his day lasts; the night cometh wherein no man can work. God in great mercy and long suffering upholds him in life, waiting for his repentance and amendment; but how long he will do so, He alone can tell. Some indeed have carried this point so far as to imagine, that a man even in this life, may have brought himself into a state, in which he cannot repent, or that God will not accept his repentance, though it be never so sincere. And this doctrine has been maintained by this very text, although there is no reason from that or any

any other part of scripture to conclude SERM.  
any such thing. I shall therefore endeavour VIII.  
your to add something to what I have  
said, and explain it more perfectly, that  
it may not be made use of to countenance  
so uncomfortable and pernicious a mistake.

The mistake seems to arise in great  
measure, from this consideration ; that  
Esau was rejected while he was a living  
man ; and therefore 'tis said, that what  
happened to him, may be the case of  
many others.

This argument indeed had been very  
good, if Esau had been finally, or for  
ever cast out of God's favour, and pro-  
posed to us literally as an example of  
it ; but, as I said before, this rejection  
does not concern his eternal state, but  
only the temporal inheritance of him and  
his posterity in the promised land. As  
for his eternal happiness or misery, we  
know nothing of it ; and notwithstanding  
any thing here said of him, he might  
have repented, and died in the favour of  
God, as all men may, if they will. So  
far we know ; that he certainly did repent  
of the malice and revenge he had conceived  
against his brother's life ; and 'tis not un-  
likely, but that his temporal loss and  
damage



SERM. damage might have brought him to a  
 VIII. serious consideration, and been a warning  
 ~~~~~ to him, not to lose his more valuable  
 riches, as it ought to be to us.

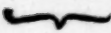
But the truth is; the history of him is only a type, and given us, not as the same, but as a likeness of the folly of impenitent sinners; and the time of bestowing the blessing, and his rejection, answers to that time of retribution, when God shall reward every one according to his works. Then indeed we allow, that without any regard to crying and tears, he will exclude all those from the blessings of the gospel, who are such fools as to despise or neglect the conditions of it, in this life.

What has been said of Esau; that he could not repent, is most grossly absurd; for he did repent, or else what was the occasion of his carefulness and tears? But he found no place for his repentance; it was rejected because it was late, and not begun till the time of retribution. And to such a repentance, the worst of sinners will be forced, at the day of judgment, if not before, at the day of death.

So much is manifest both from scripture and experience, and is a truth which well deserves to be considered; That, by an
 obstinate

obstinate persisting in sin, men may be SERM.
brought into a moral impossibility or ex- VIII.
treme difficulty of repentance. St. Paul 
supposes this, when he bids us *exhort one* Heb. iii.
another daily, while it is called to-day, lest 13.
any be hardened through the deceitfulness of
sin: because long continued habits in
sinning harden a man's heart, and turn
away the very thoughts of repentance:
so that 'tis said of some, that they *cannot*
cease from sin; which, morally speaking,
is nothing else but they will not; they
have brought themselves into such a con-
dition, that there is no more likelihood
of it, than there is of the recovery of a
person lying sick of a mortal disease.
But all this does not exclude any from
repenting, or being accepted, who are
willing and desirous of it; nor does it at
all concern those, who are actually so
wise as to reflect, and turn from their
evil ways, how long soever they have
continued in them; much less can it ex-
clude those melancholy pious persons, who
seek it carefully with tears.

There are two ways only, in which we
may judge the case of a sinner to be des-
perate, and without remedy. Either,
when he is cut off in the midst of his
sins,

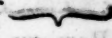
SERM. sins, or left to himself to fill up the measure of his iniquity. In the first of these, **VIII.**  no living man can be concerned; in the second, no person who is filled with godly sorrow, and is sincerely desirous of amendment. For such are no longer obstinate or hardened sinners, or left to themselves: but are the very persons to whom Christ's call is addressed: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Matt. xi.
28.

Nor do we read that this grace or favour of God, is limited to any precise point of time, as long as men have lives to reform; or as long as it is called, *to-day*; but (thanks be to God) very much to the contrary. *As I live, saith the* **Ezek.** *Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the* **xxxiii. 11** *wicked; but when the wicked man turneth* **xviii. 27.** *away from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and* **xxxiii. 12.** *right, he shall save his soul alive. As for the wickedness of the wicked he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. None of his sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.*

Ver. 16.

And

And that nothing may be wanting to SERM.
complete this act of grace, by reason of **VIII.**
mens weakness, and contracted habits of 
fin, God has promised all necessary affis-
tances of his holy spirit; He will give *them* Ezek.
a new heart, and put a new spirit within xxxvi. 26.
them. And as long as he is no respecter
of persons, no particular person can be
exempted from a share in these, and many
such like promises.

We cannot easily conceive a more des-
perately wicked man, than Manasseh king
of Judah: and yet he no sooner *humbled*
himself, and besought the Lord, but God 2 Chron.
was xxxiii. 13.
intreated of him, and his supplication was
heard. And this too, notwithstanding
he would take no warning, nor shew any
sign of repentance, 'till it was forced upon
him by affliction, and he was carried away
captive to Babylon, bound with fetters,
and in a condition, in which he was
hardly capable of sinning any longer.
And thus we see that God, in his adorable
mercy, accepted that repentance, although
it was the product of a necessity rather
than inclination. To the same purpose,
are the parables of the prodigal son, and
the lost sheep, in the fifteenth chapter of
St. Luke, and many other things which
are

SERM. are written both in the prophets and the
 VIII. gospel; and they *were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.*

Rom. xv.

4.

But to conclude: Although there is no ground for despair, either in this or any other part of scripture; yet there are many very severe remembrances of the deceitfulness and danger of sin; and the great folly there is, in complying with its temptations. The question is not therefore, whether men may not repent if they will, but whether they will or no, before 'tis too late? And of this last indeed there is very great hazard.

The cunning hunters of the things of this world may, as in a glass, see, in the case of Esau, the complexion of their own folly. I have endeavoured to hold it before their eyes; and would ask them, whether that chase after vanity, which is the main employment of their lives, does not beget in them an appetite for forbidden things, as hungry and irresistible as his was? and whether they do not comply in the shameful manner he did, and with excuses altogether as groundless? If they could but be persuaded to lay aside their boasted cunning, they might exchange it for that real wisdom,

wisdom, which would cary their views SERM.
further to the last end of things; and they VIII.
might possibly be so wise as to consider
their latter end. And for that purpose,
I shall leave this consideration upon their
minds, which is the chief design of the
text: That the time hangs over their heads,
in which God will no longer be intreated;
and their late repentance will find no
place of acceptance, *although they seek it
carefully with tears.*

Of the sin of covetousness.

LUKE xii. 15.

And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

THAT covetousness is a vice hate-SERM.
ful both to God and man, I be- IX.
lieve, is what the most covetous
person will hardly deny. Men generally
see and feel the ill effects of it in other
people, and are therefore forward to con-
demn and charge it with great folly as
well as wickedness. But as it is a vice
which proceeds from the excess of an in-
nocent and laudable desire of providing
for ourselves and those who depend upon
us; or from a just and reasonable fear of
want and poverty, which is natural to us,
and may be without blame; for this rea-
son, I say, there is some difficulty for a
man to know himself, when his desire ex-
ceeds,

SERM. ceeds, and becomes so inordinate that he

IX. may justly be said to be a covetous man.

~ For if it should proceed so far as to be notoriously manifest to the world, yet it may not be so to a man's self, because it is a vice which carries with it its own cloak, and, as it advances, shuts the eyes, or blinds the understanding, of those who are under it's power. Such men are also deaf to any sound reasoning upon the case; as indeed it is not to be expected that they should lend a willing ear to that which must set them in so odious a light, and brand them with such a character as they themselves cannot but hate. And this may be a reason why our Saviour is so earnest in this caution given us in the text: He does not only say, Beware; but *take heed and beware of covetousness*: Take heed, or see and examine into it; for 'tis a vice which is very deceitful, and will get into your hearts by stealth: Be therefore upon your guard against it; for 'tis also very pernicious in its consequences, and a worse enemy than poverty; and, in the end, will bring you into greater misery.

But further to enforce his admonition, he expressly adds another reason; which (whatever mistakes worldly men are apt
to

to make about it) might very well be as-
 fented to, by every wise and understand-
 ing person, although it had not been
 spoken by one of so great authority; *A
 man's life* (or the happiness and comforts
 of it) *consisteth not in the abundance of the
 things which he possesseth.* In the following
 discourse I shall endeavour,

First, To lay before you some signs or
 tokens of covetousness, whereby we may
 judge when that innocent and laudable
 desire of providing for ourselves, and those
 who depend upon us, exceeds and turns
 into that abominable vice: and,

Secondly, To illustrate and explain the
 truth of that excellent reason given us by
 our Saviour to avoid it, in those words;
*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of
 the things which he possesseth.*

We are taught by Christ himself, the
 best or only certain way how to judge of
 men's moral principles; and that is, by
 the fruits which they produce; *Every tree*
is known by his own fruit: for of thorns
men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush
gather they grapes. So that, whenever a
 man's desire of gain prompts him to any
 unreasonable or unwarrantable practices,
 it must be unreasonable itself, and should

Luke vi.

44.

SERM. be rooted out of his mind, with as much

IX. or more care than thorns or brambles out
 of his field or vineyard. Nor does it alter the case, or make him less a covetous man, whatever his design is, in getting to himself abundance of wealth ; whether it be to support his own luxury, pride, or vanity, or to hoard it up for his heirs ; or only to feed his fancy (as some do) with that miserable contemplation, of having a useless as well as needless treasure. So that a man may appear very munificent and charitable in some instances, and yet be very covetous ; and he is certainly so, if his desires exceed their bounds, and his mind be inordinately set upon the increase of his wealth, whatever he designs, or whatever he actually does with it.

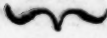
The occasion of the words sets before us two examples, which afford two general and certain marks of covetousness. One is, of a person who had unjustly seized upon his brother's right ; and another, whose heart was so fixed upon his temporal affairs, that he could not attend to any thing else ; but was more concerned to recover his present inheritance, than to make himself an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Thus we have it at the thirteenth verse ;

*One of the company said unto him (Christ) SERM.
Master, speak to my brother, that he divide IX.
the inheritance with me; and he said unto* ~~~~~

him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? By his thus coming to Christ, we may well suppose that he took him for a person of extraordinary authority, as well as justice; and perhaps for what he really was; the Messiah and Son of God: and likewise that his cause was just, as they who are conscious that they have right on their side, are most desirous of having arbitrators of the strictest justice and impartiality. But then 'tis plain, from the answer he received, that he was very unseasonable, and had his heart inordinately set upon his worldly affairs. For it so blinded him, that he could not see the mischief he did, by interrupting our Saviour, when he was instructing his disciples in the way of eternal life; nor his own true interest, which was, to seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof. This man therefore was covetous, as well as his brother, although his vice might not carry him so far, as to downright injustice, and oppression of other men.

And as these two gave occasion to our Saviour to turn his discourse to that subject, so they give us two general marks of

SERM. covetousness, to which most if not all

IX. others may be reduced; it being certain,  that covetous men pursue their ends, either by unjust means, or, if not so, yet immoderately, to their own trouble and disquiet, and the neglect of their duty as christians, who ought rather to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven, and be content at present with such things as they have.

Under the first of these, may be considered, not only oppression in the highest instances, such as unjustly seizing upon estates; but also all other injurious and hard dealings which chiefly belong to those who are rich and powerful. For although these will not steal and plunder like common thieves, yet such of them as are covetous, have ways and means peculiar to themselves, by which they do the same in effect, and fancy that they avoid the shame and scandal that belongs to it. But if they are deaf to the sufferings and complaints of the poor, and such as are injured by their means; if they will not conscientiously examine into such complaints, and make restitution where 'tis due, but connive at, if not encourage, the wrong doing; we need not look any further for signs of a thievish and covetous temper. And,

And, if that vice did not blind their SERM. eyes, and withhold them from seeing the IX. plain truth, and the nature of what they do, they could not thus flatter themselves, but common humanity, and the shame of the world, if they had no religious fears, would, in a great measure, restrain them from such doings.

But covetousness (as I have already observed) has always a cloak with it, and such an one as will fit, not only the rich and great, but people of all ranks and degrees, from the highest to the lowest. And hence it is that, among those who call themselves christians, we find many workers of iniquity; who, while they are cheating other people, put a worse cheat upon themselves, and are the greatest strangers to their own character. They think themselves honest, and imagine that other men will think so too, because their ways of stealing and cheating are more close, and safe from present censure or punishment. 'Tis well known, that there are many such ways practised in the world; and perhaps many more, which are unknown to honest men; and even they, who practise them, are, in a great measure, ignorant of, or do not justly weigh, the

SERM. wickedness of their own actions. With

IX. such men, 'tis accounted weakness and
 ~~~~~ folly to acknowledge a truth in favour of  
 another's right, when it turns to their own  
 discount; 'tis testifying, as they say, against  
 themselves. But they do not consider that  
 they are only a more cunning sort of  
 thieves, as long as they withhold what  
 they know to be the property of another  
 man. And, in short, if they do not sin-  
 cerely and conscientiously render to every  
 one his due; if they are not as careful  
 not to wrong another person, as they are  
 not to receive injury themselves; if they  
 do not answer all the reasonable expecta-  
 tions of those they deal with; they are  
 then, far from being true and just in all  
 their dealings: they do not answer the  
 end of their calling, nor obey the royal  
 law of him whose disciples they profess  
 themselves to be; and who has said, *What-*  
 Matt. vii.  
 12. *soever ye would that men should do to you, do*  
*ye even so to them; for this is the law and the*  
*prophets.*

Secondly; Under the second instance  
 may be found some other signs by which  
 men may be convinced of covetousness,  
 although they are not guilty of defrauding  
 or cheating other people. For by this vice,  
 they

they are driven to immoderate cares and fears, anxiety and trouble of mind; and to the neglect of their everlasting happiness,

This was the case of the man who came to Christ, and thought the settling his right of inheritance a work of more importance, than the preaching of the gospel, to which he was not then at leisure to attend. Such inordinate care for the world, is a great enemy to that christian watchfulness, which is the duty of all people; and for which we have the following caution given us, in another place of this

*gospel; Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.*

Luke  
xxi. 34.

And what is it, but covetousness, joined with a distrust in God's providence, which makes so many shew, by their actions, that they think the things of this life of so great consequence, as to excuse them in the neglect of any other. They cannot afford time for daily devotion, either in the family or in the closet, or so much as for a weekly sabbath, but think all is lost which is not employed in their worldly affairs. They will therefore steal as much of it as they can for such purposes, robbing

God



SERM. God of his honour, and themselves of their

IX. temporal and eternal rest.

When they cannot conveniently act after this manner, the time sticks upon their hands, and they say, in their hearts, with those covetous Jews, of whom the prophet Amos speaks ; *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ; and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat ?* Thus men of all occupations are so busy in labouring for the meat which perisheth, that they have no taste of any other ; much less will they take due care and pains, or spend their time about it. But, that men should do these things, and, at the same time, profess christianity, no account can be given, but that they are overcharged, or besotted, if not with surfeiting and drunkenness, yet more deeply and permanently with the cares of this life.

Again ; Other marks and signs of covetousness, are manifest, when men cannot, or rather will not, perform the duties which they owe to their families, their friends, or their poor neighbours. These things are certain signs of it, and most of all, render that vice very odious to mankind. For who indeed can be much inclined to love or esteem a man who is not capable of

of being a good father, a good master, SERM.  
 or a good friend? 'Tis from the great IX.  
 power which the love of money has over  
 the heart and affections of some men, that  
 we see, in many families, sons as well as  
 servants complaining, and destitute of  
 those necessaries and comforts of life,  
 which, according to their condition, they  
 ought to be allowed: whereby the wise  
 man's proverb is made good; *He that is* Prov. xv.  
*greedy of gain troubleth his own house.* 27.  
 Friendship, for the same reason, stops  
 short, and is at an end, when the purse is  
 aimed at, and the beloved mammon is in  
 danger. As for the poor, it cannot be  
 expected that they should have any reason-  
 able portion, from one who is not to be  
 moved by duty, friendship, or natural af-  
 fection itself. Such a one is not likely to  
 remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how Acts xx.  
 he said; *It is more blessed to give than to* 35.  
*receive.*

We must not think to take a view at  
 once, of all the mischiefs of this vice; it  
 being, as St. Paul says, *The root of all evil*:  
 but these I have taken notice of, as some  
 signs among others, which, though suffi-  
 ciently manifest to the world, few people  
 can discover in themselves. If they could,  
 they

SERM. they must abhor their own character, and

IX. take more heed, and beware of that covetousness, which renders them so unfit for their duty as christians, and for charitable or social virtues. And, in a word; let such remember, that if they do any thing inconsistent with that trust in God, which he requires, or being content in their condition with such things as they have; or with that charity which seeketh not her own; in so doing, they shew themselves covetous men, though they should not be drawn into all that train of wickedness and mischief, of which covetousness is the root.

But, as men are generally led into sin, not merely by the force of appetite or inordinate desire, but by some mistake or error in their judgment of things; so this is, in a peculiar manner, the case of covetous men. And therefore, to convince them of it, our Saviour here points out their grand mistake, by telling us, that *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*: the truth of which I shall now endeavour, according to my second proposition, to illustrate or explain.

Among

Among christians, indeed, this should SERM.  
need no other proof, than that it was IX.  
spoken by Christ himself, whose doctrine  
they all acknowledge to be the word of  
God. But by the general practice of man-  
kind, we find, that how great soever the  
authority of a teacher may be, yet they  
are still more apt to be influenced by such  
truths as they see by their own observation  
and experience. So that although, in this  
case, I can say nothing which will add to  
the certainty of our Saviour's words; yet,  
by making it the subject of our own obser-  
vation, we may help towards our prac-  
tice, which is much wanted; and without  
which, no assent to, or belief in, the scrip-  
tures, can be of any advantage to us at all.

It is not to be denied, but that riches  
are the means of procuring most of those  
things, in which our present happiness  
consists; and without a competency of  
these, even the necessary comforts of life,  
are not ordinarily to be had. But from  
this truth, most people seem to have  
drawn a very false and erroneous conse-  
quence; imagining that, therefore, the  
more of wealth they possess, the more  
happy they shall be: so that abundance  
of the things of this life, which at best,  
can



SERM. can be but a means of happiness, has been  
IX. mistaken for that happiness itself.

Now, that it is not so, is very evident, because we do not find the happiest people among those who are most rich. They are not more free from sickness and pain, grief and sorrow, anxiety and sollicitude, fear of death or death itself, than the meanest of those people, who perhaps look upon them with envy or admiration. They can indeed procure more of the desirable things of this world; but then, as they can eat or drink only to such a measure, so also all their enjoyments have their bounds, which they cannot pass. And as, by excess in meat and drink, men get nothing better than surfeiting and pain; so, by an unreasonable pursuit of any other pleasures, beyond their capacities of enjoyment, they meet with no delight; but, instead of it, loathing and disappointment, to the great vexation of the flesh as well as spirit. And, truly, there is hardly any thing upon earth more miserable, or more the object of pity, than a person eagerly pursuing his pleasures, and serving his lusts and passions, by the assistance of a plentiful fortune. He flies from one vanity to another, and wrecks the

the creature to extort from it that happiness which it cannot give: and the best he gets, is only a little amusement, and to be insensible of his condition. But this will not last long neither; for his own weariness will, at length, make him feel his misery, though generally when 'tis too late; when his lusts have got such power over him that he cannot retreat, but is forced to go on, and take more pains to ease himself of the tediousness and burthen of his life, than the poorest man does for his necessary food.

In the parable following my text, the rich man is represented as promising himself much ease and happiness, upon the prospect of his great increase. He says to his soul; *thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.* Now, this was very foolish in respect to the uncertainty of his life; but more so from the insufficiency of his abundance, to procure him the promised pleasure and ease. For, if he could not be happy without that abundance, he was hardly qualified to be happy with it. Instead of taking more than ordinary ease, he was more likely to be deprived of his natural and necessary rest. For *the sleep of*

SERM. *a labouring man, says the preacher, is sweet,*

IX. *whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich, will not suffer him to sleep.*

Eccles. v. 12. And thus, as it follows in the next verse;

Ver. 13. *Riches are kept by the owners thereof, to their hurt: as indeed they always must be, when men set their hearts upon them as their happiness, and are not qualified by a pious, virtuous and charitable disposition, to use them to those good purposes, for which they were designed.*

Now, notwithstanding it is manifest, from innumerable instances, or from the general practice of rich men, that few are qualified for a large fortune; but, on the contrary, most have employed their wealth, more or less, to the ends of injustice and oppression, pride, revenge, luxury and debauchery, as well as to their own disquiet and unhappiness; yet every one who would be rich, will still flatter himself, that he shall not do after this manner. He abhors those vices which are incident to rich men; and thinks how well he would behave, if he was but in their circumstances. He would not only free himself from any further care of life, but be virtuous and good, generous and charitable; and make the poor and all people his

his friends, with this mammon of un-  
righteousness. This he may promise him-  
self with great assurance; but how well he

SERM. IX.

would perform, God only knows. If he is not content with his present condition, and does not lead a godly, righteous and sober life; if he does not do that good in proportion now, which he promises to do in a higher station, he only flatters himself with his own ignorance and self-conceit. It is God who best knows what we are qualified for, who has called every one to his particular state of life, and promised to support him in it; and he who has faith enough to be content, and cast all his care upon Him who careth for us, is as free from the cares of life as a man can be: but, if otherwise, all the affluence in the world will not lessen, but increase them; every new addition of wealth, will be a new addition of care, and only help him to *pierce himself through with many sorrows*. In a low condition of life, he may be free from the temptations of such enjoyments as are out of his reach, and consequently from those vices which they are often the occasion of: but the case is quite different when pleasures draw near in sight, and offer themselves to his choice,

1 Tim.  
vi. 10.

O

while



SERM. while he is furnished with power and abi-

IX. lities to enjoy them, and has little or no  
 ~~~~~ objection against it from the things of this  
 world. For, if opportunities of sinning
 are temptations to it, as most people will
 own, there are none greater than such as
 riches afford ; and how useful they have
 been to such bad purposes, is manifest by too
 many examples. The wisest man was fool
 enough to be led astray, because he was like-
 wise the richest, and had so great opportuni-
 ties of doing whatsoever his soul lusted after.
 And therefore, as we have such examples
 before us, no man should desire to be
 brought under such temptations, unless he
 was sure that his virtue would so increase
 with his wealth, that, being tried, he might
 not be overcome. But if any one could
 possibly be sure of this, the discontented, co-
 vetous, aspiring man is, of all others, the
 most unlikely so to be. The apostle more
 truly points out his end ; *They that will be*
 1 Tim. *rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and*
 vi. 9. *into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which*
drown men in destruction and perdition.

The conclusion of the whole matter is
 this ; although God has ordered the dif-
 ferent degrees of station in the world one
 above another, trying with some riches and
 honour,

honour, and others with poverty and disgrace; yet he has not confined present happiness to any one of these degrees, and left others destitute of his favour; much less has he assigned it to those only who are rich and great: He has not done this, I say, but rather left it to every man to seek his happiness, by being content, and doing his duty in that state of life to which he is called; and by that means contributing (as much as is in his power) to the happiness of all his fellow-creatures, and the glory of God.

Now, if this be true, and we can, in earnest, agree with our Saviour, that *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*; how miserably must they be mistaken (how many soever they be) who make it the chief business of their lives, and their heart's delight, to be always scraping and gathering a little something more than they have! Such as these have put it out of the way of providence to make them happy. *For he that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.* They lose the substance by catching at the shadow, and miss the end by resting in the means: they bereave themselves of the comforts and

Ecc. v.

10.

SERM. enjoyments of life, by eagerly seeking them

IX. where they are not. It is, in the prophet's language, *spending money for that which is not bread; and labour for that which satisfieth not.*

Ifai. lv. 4.

But how much greater still does the folly appear, if we consider the case of these men, with respect to futurity? the hazard, or rather certain destruction, of their souls! Our Saviour warns them of their danger

Mark x. in most astonishing terms; *How hardly*
 23. *shall they that have riches enter into the*
 24. *kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel*
to go through the eye of a needle, than for
a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Not that it is at all sinful to possess riches, which are indeed a great blessing to some few people, and a means of much good; but by this our Saviour sets forth the force of those manifold temptations which attend upon riches, both in the getting and disposing of them. He expressly tells us, that his meaning is of those who trust in riches; which is always the case of worldly-minded and covetous men. For if they did not look upon them as their chief happiness, and support of their lives, they would not, for their sake, be so regardless of

of the favour both of God and man as ^{SERM.}
they are. ^{IX.}

To conclude : Since the things of this world can, at best, but serve us while we continue here ; since they cannot secure us from the common calamities, and sad accidents of life, but are frequently the occasion of them ; since the increase of wealth does but very rarely add to our happiness, and much oftner to our care and trouble, as well as to our accounts hereafter ; how unworthy of our christian prudence must it be to set our hearts so much upon the getting of them, as to hazard that unspeakable blessing, everlasting life ! to lay up treasure for ourselves or others, and not take the first care to be rich towards God !

Rather, let every one who is not so foolish as to be altogether regardless of futurity, pray, with the church, That God being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

21

The Christian's pattern; or, the necessity of meekness and humility.

MAT. XI. 29.

—Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart—

THE foregoing verse begins with a ^{SERM.} most gracious and pathetic invitation of Christ, to all sinners, to ^{X.} come unto him; *i. e.* to believe in him, and take upon them the profession of his name and doctrine, and to live in a faithful and sincere obedience to the same, as the only sure refuge, and ease from the heavy load and burden of their sins.—Come unto ^{Ver. 28.} me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

The doctrine of the gospel is called a yoke, as it is a law which lays restraints upon

SERM. upon our unruly passions and lusts. But

X. then, 'tis such a one as is light and easy, useful and profitable for us ; and not like the

Gal. v. ceremonial law of the Jews, which St. Paul

1. calls, very justly, *a yoke of bondage* ; and

Acts xv. St. Peter, *a yoke which neither their fathers*

10. nor they were able to bear : which was also

Heb. vii. 18. *disannulled for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

But if the yoke of Christ is easy in comparison with the Jewish law, it is much more so, in opposition to the heavy burden of sin ; that slavish yoke of Satan, under which when a man has once bent his neck, and given up his freedom, he must drudge on in great misery, whether he wills it or no, being continually pushed forward and goaded by his own lusts. Freedom from this miserable state, and the more sad consequences of it, is what Christ here proclaims, and promises to all who truly turn unto him ; or to all who, in good earnest, and without reserve, will make his gospel, and not the fashion of the world, the rule of their lives. All Christians who have not renounced their baptism, profess and pretend to do thus much ; and the reason why so many are no better than pretenders, is not from the difficulty

difficulty of the work, as if it was a yoke SERM.
of bondage, but because they themselves X.
are under a yoke of a contrary nature; 
under the power of their own passion and
pride. There is not a greater, or more
universal enemy to Christianity than this;
'tis too visible among the meanest of the
people; and as long as it is so, they very
falsely pretend to be disciples of him, who
is meek and lowly in heart. Meekness and
humility are not only great and shining
graces of Christianity, but the very foun-
dation of the whole. Without these,
there is no passing through the several
parts of our duty; no *running with pati-
ence the race that is set before us.* Great
reason therefore there was, that Christ
should insert these words in this his kind
call and invitation to sinners; *Learn of me,
for I am meek and lowly in heart.* It was
very great encouragement to those people,
to whom he spake, to learn of such a mas-
ter, who was *meek and lowly in heart*; and
not like those proud and conceited teachers
of the scribes and pharisees, who used their
disciples with contempt; and *bound heavy
burdens, grievous to be borne, and laid them
on men's shoulders, while they themselves would* Mat. xxiii.
not move them with one of their fingers. 4.

Whereas,

SERM. Whereas, on the contrary, he puts upon

X. us an easy yoke, such as he took upon himself, enjoining no unnecessary things ; nothing but what, upon a fair examination, appears to be reasonable, as well as of necessity for our well-being or happiness.

But howsoever light and easy the yoke of Christ may be in itself, we shall in vain pretend to bear it, unless we can learn this first and fundamental lesson of meekness and humility ; and therefore I have chosen these words of my text, to set before you the great usefulness and necessity of it, in order to a patient and uniform perseverance in a christian life.

I shall first speak of it in general ; and,

Secondly, by applying it to some particular branches of the duty of those who have taken upon them the yoke of Christ, or are called by his name.

Now, although meekness and lowliness in heart, or humility, are different graces as they stand in the constitution or disposition of the mind ; yet, in their operations or effects, they are not always easy to be distinguished ; the same christian behaviour often arises from one or the other, or both together : and therefore, in speaking

speaking of their uses, to attempt any SERM.
such distinction, will not only be needless, X.
but an hindrance to that plainness of dis-
course, which ought to be chiefly regarded
in this place. They are certainly con-
comitant graces, and seldom or never sepa-
rate from one another, it being very rare,
if ever to be found, that the same person
is proud and not passionate, or humble,
and yet not slow to wrath.

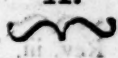
That such as are proud and haughty to
a high degree, should, at the same time, be
good Christians, I believe, will not be al-
lowed by any one else, if they themselves
should pretend to it. God is said to *resist* Jam: iv. 6.
them, and to *behold them* in their proper
station, *i. e. far off from himself*: and we Psal.
know that mankind are very much in- cxlviii. 1
clined to do the same, as far as they are 6.
able; the proud in heart being an abomi-
nation both to God and man. But this
universal enemy, this epidemical corrup-
tion, is more mischievous as it operates
more or less in the hearts of all people,
and has too great influence on their lives;
so that if any one should affirm that he
is absolutely free from it, he may as soon
be believed, if he should say, that he has
no sin. Were it not that people do not
rightly

SERM. rightly understand themselves, what they

X. are, and the condition they are in, they
 would be more sensible of the need they
 have of a Saviour than they seem to be :
 they would not be so averse to his yoke, or
 so apt to reject the means which God has
 appointed for our amendment and salva-
 tion. He that is indigent and helpless,
 void of that good which he stands in need
 of, and distinguished from other creatures
 by his sin and guilt; if he knew his own
 case, and was not of the Lamian fashion,
 blind at home, must, with his whole
 heart and strength, seek his relief and de-
 liverance, and be ready to follow Christ
 upon any conditions, though it be those
 of self-denial, and taking up the cross.
 But as *the whole need not a physician*, so they
 who think themselves so, will neither de-
 sire one nor submit themselves to his care :
 which was plainly the case of those pha-
 risees whom Christ reproves as being righ-
 teous in their own eyes, and therefore too
 proud and conceited to learn of one who
 was *meek and lowly in heart*; or to think
 they had any need of his help or instruc-
 tion. People at present indeed do not en-
 tirely reject him, but take upon them his
 name and profession, things which, merely
 of

Mat. ix.

12.

of themselves, are not likely to give them SERM.
any mortification or trouble; or to lessen X.
them as they stand in their own esteem. 

They will also very readily lay hold of that pardon of sin, and everlasting life, or any other advantages which Christ offers, except the greatest and most necessary of all; which is an impartial repentance and amendment of life. For, in order to this, they must take his yoke upon them entirely, and without reserve; they must follow him in all respects, and obey whatsoever he commands; which is not the general usage of all who call upon his name. Very many, I believe, find something or other too galling and grievous to be borne; something which they think that they neither need nor deserve to undergo, and therefore will not, as long as they can satisfy themselves without it, and continue whole in their own eyes. And hence it is, that the christian religion is practised by halves, or in parts; every one chusing his part according to the complexion or disposition of his mind, or according to the knowledge or esteem he has of it, and of himself. The lukewarmness and partial obedience of the church of *Laodicea*, proceeded from the high opinion

SERM. nion she had of herself, and her ignorance

X. of her real estate; for which she is so severely
 Rev. iii. 17. reprov'd: *Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked.*

And without doubt, it proceeds chiefly from the same mistake, that particular persons can so easily wave the most distinguishing parts of their duty, and even disdain them as things of no use, or esteem in the world.

'Tis manifest enough, that lust and avarice are great and powerful enemies, and directly contrary to the christian life: But pride, passion and conceit are yet of more mischievous consequence, as they are greater obstacles to repentance. For these turn away the ear from instruction, and much more from reproof; and by detaining people in a blind insensibility of their condition, stop all the overtures of amendment by any means, either of the assistance of men, or of the grace of God. Were it not so, that *Wrath which*
 Rom. i. 18. *is so plainly revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,* would be more prevalent than it is, and men would not only profess, but practise; and
 use

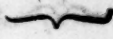
use all means with all diligence, to perfect their repentance, and secure to themselves a refuge against the day of it. But the case is ; they cannot easily be persuaded that they themselves may be the objects of it ; but by comparing themselves with one another, and measuring their goodness by the rate of the world, they very easily join with the Laodiceans in their ignorance and pride, and consequently in hating instruction, and scorning reproof : and as they can flatter themselves that they have need of nothing, they will take no care or pains to be any thing better than what they are. Were they more humble and sensible of their wants, and the danger they are in, and the great need they have of God's assistance, they would be more solicitous to obtain it ; they would desire to be under his conduct, and directed by his laws ; and think nothing too difficult, or too mean for their practice, which belongs to the yoke of Christ, or the duty of his followers and disciples. And in a word ; it may be observed that christians in general, walk worthy of their vocation, and live up to the rules of their profession, more or less, according to the share they have of meekness and lowliness of

SERM. of heart, or of the contrary, wrath, pride,
 X. and an inordinate desire of worldly esteem.

But, secondly; We shall best be convinced of the necessity of attaining to these virtues, by applying it to some particular branches of our religion, or of the duty of all those who have taken upon them the yoke of Christ.

And first; Our master is very express in the
 Matt. v. following command; *I say unto you, love your*
 44. *enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them*
that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully
use you, and persecute you. And how much
 more quiet and peacable would the world
 be, and the happiness of mankind be
 thereby advanced, if all Christians could
 submit themselves, and yield a willing
 obedience to their master in this particular?
 And why will they not? since he has confirmed the reasonableness of it to us by his own practice? He prayed, and died for his most bitter enemies. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; and when he suffered he threatened not.* He was continually doing good to all who came in his way, and gave us a perfect example of a most extensive and unexceptionable charity, in his whole life and conversation. This is a part of his yoke, which he bore in a most
 signal

1 Pet. ii.
 23.

signal manner himself; and, as he tells us, SERM.
the disciple is not above his Master, nor the X.
servant above his Lord. Why therefore, I 
say, is not this the universal practice of all
the disciples of this good master, or of all
the servants of this great Lord? Whatever
other reasons there may be, there are none
so apparent as this; that these pretended
disciples of Christ are not prepared for it,
as he was, by the temper and disposition
of their minds. He was *meek and lowly in*
heart, but they are more, or less, passionate
and proud: He was ready to forgive inju-
ries, and indignities offered to his person,
but they are more ready to fall with fury
upon one another: He pitied the infirmi-
ties and follies of mankind, which they
are more apt to triumph over and disdain.
And, as long as they are so unlike him in
heart and affections, 'tis not to be expected
that they should obey his precepts, or imi-
tate his practice. Pride is so far from the
love of enemies, that 'tis the greatest occa-
sion why men have any enemies at all.
By that alone, as Solomon says, *contention* Prov. xiii.
will arise; and contention must soon pass 10.
into a settled enmity, where *humbleness of* Col. iii.
mind, meekness and long-suffering are want- 12, 13.
ing to the forbearance of one another.

SERM. The present practice of the world may

X. convince us that this is true. For although the love of riches or power may often divide men into parties ; and form an opposition ; yet, upon such occasions, things are carried on in such an uncharitable and malicious manner, that 'tis very plain, that there is something of nearer alliance to Lucifer at the bottom. Proud wrath, which gives a relish and sweetness to revenge, prompts men to do mischief, not always for the sake of advantage, but merely to shew that they are able, and resolved to be at defiance with one another ; and that they had rather have a Luciferian triumph, than a christian forbearance and peace. When a man's person therefore and estate are out of reach, evil-speaking, lying and slandering will go a great way in shewing what manner of spirit they are of. To talk of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and the obligations of the christian profession, while people are under such influences, is looked upon as a strange language ; 'tis *singing the Lord's song in a strange land*. But if Christ were now upon earth, might he not again repeat that severe reproof ? *Ye are of your fa-*

John viii

44.

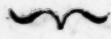
ther

ther the devil, and the lusts of your father SERM.
you will do. For as long as Christians will X.
indulge their pride and passion, 'tis morally
impossible they should do better: until
they have learned to be of the same mind
and disposition with their master, they
cannot love their enemies; they cannot
bless when they are cursed; they cannot
return good for evil, nor do any of those
things which are peculiar to the meek and
lowly in heart. But if such as these are
disciples of that Lord and master, whose
name they profess, they have strangely
inverted the nature of things; and, by
disdaining that yoke to which he him-
self did so readily submit, have set the dis-
ciple above his Master, and the servant
above his Lord.

These doctrines indeed are peculiar to
christianity, and were hardly ever taught
in the world before; and therefore 'tis
no wonder that they find no better enter-
tainment in a generation so averse to in-
struction in christian knowledge, and much
more to the practice of it. They are some
of those things of the spirit of God, which
the natural man receiveth not.

Secondly; The bad influences of pride
and passion will not stop here, or in any
P 2 degree

SERM. degree of wickedness ; but being impa-

X. tient of restraint, will break through all the obligations of religion, prudence and morality.

The scripture is very express in injoining the observation of all relative duties ; such as are between magistrates and subjects, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. And, most certainly, the order of things, the peace and happiness of mankind in general, and of families in particular, all lay us under the same obligations ; and no man disputes the equity of those laws, 'till the case becomes his own ; and pride and stubbornness, having possession of the heart, determine against any law whatsoever. And hence it is, that superiors of all kinds, are honoured and obeyed, not willingly or conscientiously, for the sake of duty, but just as far as their inferiors are obliged by temporal sanctions, fear of punishment, or hopes of advantage. And 'tis too frequently seen, that where none of these are, authority becomes despicable ; and they who are under it, and ought to submit, take a pride in shewing that they are able to resist.

Nor

Nor is the mischief less on the other SERM. side; for where authority is, there is X. most need of humility and condescension; and yet, 'tis very apt to produce the contrary, and to add to the high esteem men have of themselves. He who is puffed up with reflection on the dignity of his place and superiority, will assume and insult; and exercise his power, whatever it is, not for the good of others, as it was designed, but for his own humour and advantage; and by wrong dealing, peevishness and passion, becomes intolerable to all who are under his care and inspection.

But if the want of christian meekness and humility, does so indispose men for behaving well under such particular obligations, how little will they be prepared to comply with some other precepts concerning that general relation of christian brethren? They are such as these; *All of you be subject one to another. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. And, let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* And yet, if they will be christians indeed, they must do these things; they must be clothed with humility, or let it be habitual to

1 Pet.
v. 5.
Eph v.
21.

Phil. ii.
3.

SERM. them; they must, as St. Paul says, *put*
X. on Christ, or be of the same spirit and
 disposition that he was. For, *if any man*
 Rom. viii. *have not the spirit of Christ, he is none*
 9. *of his.*

Thirdly; As the want of meekness and
 humility does so much disqualify us for
 christian duties, and a right behaviour
 towards one another, so will it absolutely
 render us unfit for a christian reward.
 This our Saviour signified to us when he
 called a little child unto him, and set him
 Matt. in the midst of his disciples, and said; *Ve-*
 xviii. 2, 3. *rily, I say unto you, except ye be converted,*
and become as little children, ye shall not enter
into the kingdom of heaven. It was a very
 seasonable check upon their ambition,
 and vain expectations, when they were so
 solicitous to know who should be greatest
 in that kingdom. From a mistaken no-
 tion of things, they had conceived an un-
 due elation of spirit, which is always apt
 to aim at the prime dignity of place,
 though altogether inconsistent with any
 place at all in the kingdom of heaven;
 a kingdom not intended for the wise men
 after the flesh, or politicians, nor for the
 mighty or noble, but for such of all ranks,
 who can humble themselves as a little
 child.

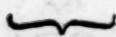
child. This they are plainly told; *Whofo-* SERM.
ever shall humble himself as this little child, X.
the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. ~~~~~

This doctrine and determination of Christ should, by all means, be considered by those men whose pride and high stomach have brought a quite contrary fashion upon the christian world. Christ has introduced the child as a proper emblem of humility and meekness, and a pattern most worthy of our imitation; but they, on the contrary, have set him aside, as a more proper symbol of shame and cowardice; and for that reason they cannot humble themselves, nor forgive injuries, nor pass by affronts, because such behaviour is looked upon, by men of their own fashion and taste, as childish and weak. But whether they will consider it or no, they must be converted and become as little children, or they must lay aside all hopes of the kingdom of heaven, or else this gospel is not true.

It seems indeed to be no small slur upon our pride, that we are sent to learn of our own children; not that we should be childish in all respects, but meek, innocent and harmless, free from malice and revenge, and teachable, as they are. In

SERM. other things, we are to shew ourselves

X. men, and remember that we have all pro-

mised to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue his faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end. St. Paul distinguishes after the following manner ;

1 Cor. *Be not children in understanding ; howbeit, in*
xiv. 20. *malice be ye children, but in understanding be*
men. The meekness and humility of the

child is not at all inconsistent with the courage and fortitude of the man, but they rather go together ; cowardice being most frequently found among the proud, imperious, revengeful and weak. Who more valiant or renowned for courage in war, than David king of Israel ? And yet in all the greatness and glory of his court, he

Pf. cxxxi. could truly say ; *Lord, I am not high-minded,*
1, 2. *I have no proud looks ; my soul is even as a weaned child.* And why then should we be ashamed of that character which was the greatest ornament of the greatest men, and approved and beloved by God himself ?

1 Pet. iii. *A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of*
4. *God of great price ;* and therefore proposed by St. Peter as the most proper ornament for christian women ; who, as they are not averse to adorning themselves, would

un-

undoubtedly put it on, could they once SERM.
be persuaded that it was really becoming X.
and ornamental. But as long as their
minds are taken up with ornaments of
another nature, and they can value them-
selves more upon an outward appearance,
a high spirit, and the merit of their own
imagination, they are not in a way to be
convinced of that truth. The world is
apt to judge otherwise, for the most part,
and they are too apt to comply with the
majority ; not well considering that Chris-
tians are not to run with the multitude,
but to renounce the world, and adorn
themselves with that wedding garment,
without which, Christ will not own them
to be his, nor admit them to a place in his
kingdom.

These few observations may suffice to
let us see how necessary it is for all who
would take Christ's yoke upon them, and
be his disciples, to be *meek and lowly in
heart* ; and we may very well suppose that
they who are averse to it, will rather hate
and despise, than love and obey him, whose
peculiar character it is, and who so loving-
ly invites us to learn it of himself. But
before I conclude, I will briefly add a word
or two to shew, that by learning this fun-
damental

SERM. damental lesson most perfectly, every

X. Christian takes the best and only way to
 ~ render his yoke easy and his life most comfortable.

.Matt. v. And first, *Blessed are the meek, for they*

5. *shall inherit the earth.* Which promise of our Saviour, if it does not assure us that the meek shall always abound in the good things of this present earth ; yet may they expect from hence, to enjoy what they have, be it more or less, with more peace and quietness, more freedom from strife and trouble, than such as are of a contrary spirit and disposition. It must be so from the nature of things ; and therefore the wise man pronounces, that *he who is*

Prov. xvi.

32.

slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. And why so, but because, by that means, he acquires great good to himself, and at the same time hurts no body else ? His conquest is without bloodshed, and the destruction of other people. Pride and passion, by innumerable ways and means, will render a man unhappy, even in the height of prosperity, and in the midst of a most plentiful fortune ; and has a share in almost all the calamities of life. We suffer many things from the
 hand

hand of God, and many injuries and of-
fences from the weakness and wickedness
of mankind; but in most cases, the worst
that is felt, is that sting of pride and re-
venge, which we harbour within ourselves.
Whereas, meekness and humility, by their
own softness, will deaden the stroke, and
ward off half the blow, and render those
things light and easy, which are usually
looked upon as intolerable and unpardon-
able. And certainly, if contentedness in
all estates and conditions, patience under
troubles and afflictions, peace and tran-
quillity of mind, with freedom from bit-
terness and wrath, anger and clamour,
are necessary for our present happiness;
all these are the genuine offspring of
meekness and lowliness in heart; without
which, whatsoever situation a man may
be in, they are not to be expected or en-
joyed.

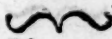
Secondly, That which renders the life of
a Christian most comfortable, and makes
his duty a delight, is the hopes of a blessed
immortality, and a happy escape from that
dreadful misery and destruction, which
must inevitably overtake a careless and
wicked world. As long as he can main-
tain these hopes, he will not be greatly
cast

SERM. cast down, nor extremely miserable for

X. losses and disappointments in temporal affairs; whereas, if these fail, and are succeeded by fears and doubts, concerning his eternal state, he has then but little taste or enjoyment from any thing he possesses, and no peace in his mind.

Now, there is nothing will more conduce to his relief under such dark and melancholy apprehensions, than a consciousness that he has endeavoured sincerely to follow his Saviour in meekness and lowliness of heart. If his fears are just, and arise from a remissness and neglect of duty, or a too great application to the world, these graces are the best preparation for amendment and pardon.

And hence it is, that they have the highest commendations in the holy scriptures; so that whosoever duly considers the many peculiar promises which God has made to such as are truly humble and of a contrite heart, will be apt to conclude, that such as these cannot fail of salvation in the end. This indeed is not to be understood as if meekness and humility alone were sufficient to make our calling and election sure; but as they are the foundation of all other necessary qualifications, and
place

place a man, in the most peculiar manner, SERM.
under the direction and guidance of the X.
Holy Ghost. *The meek will be guide in* 
judgment, and the meek will be teach his Pf. xxxv.
way. God, who resisteth the proud, will give 9.
his grace to the humble. Jam. iv.
These are the tem- 6.
ples which he has chosen for the habitation
of his holy Spirit. *For, thus saith the high* Isa. lvii.
and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity; I dwell 15.
in the high and holy place, with him also that
is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the
spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of
the contrite ones.

How then can we think that any of these should perish, who are so near unto God, and so favoured of him? Therefore when a man has gone so far in the school of Christ, as to have learned this lesson of his master, so that he can apply to himself these and many more ample promises, and examples of God's particular regard, it must give him great comfort, under any fears and inquietudes which his many failings and infirmities may bring upon him. Humility will be to him that very *secret place of the most high*, in which who- Pf. xci.
soever dwells, shall abide under the shadow of 1.
the Almighty.

And

SERM. And to conclude; If we desire peace
X. and quietness in this present life, together
~~~~~ with the hopes of a blessed and happy end,  
the right way to it, is here shewn us by  
Christ himself; *Take my yoke upon you, and  
learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart :*  
and then, we need not doubt of the pro-  
mise which follows; *Ye shall find rest unto  
your souls.*

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## Of the care of the soul.

DEUT. iv. 9.

*Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.*

**T**HIS chapter, from whence the SERM.  
words are taken, contains a plain XI.  
and most pathetic exhortation to  
obedience, directed to a people very am-  
ply instructed by miracle, and convinced  
of the being and power of God more im-  
mediately by God himself. For thus we  
read at the thirty-sixth verse: *Out of hea-  
ven he made thee to hear his voice, that he  
might instruct thee; and upon earth, he shew-  
ed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his  
words out of the midst of the fire.* Nor did  
God reveal himself once or twice only, but  
by a continued series of signs and wonders,  
with uncommon miraculous judgments,  
wrought before the eyes of them who were  
then alive, and of their forefathers for  
many

SERM. many years past; as the books of *Moses* do

XI. abundantly testify. Under such circumstances, such undeniable proofs of the power, justice and goodness of God, it seems reasonable to imagine, that those people should have been so fully convinced, and confirmed in their faith and obedience, as to be in no danger of falling from it; or to need any exhortations or admonitions to preserve them from such apparent madness and folly.

They could not but be sensible that their whole safety and happiness must depend upon their cleaving stedfastly unto God, being taught it, and assured of the same, by what their eyes had seen, and their ears had heard. And so much as this, they themselves acknowledge by their unanimous repeated promises of obedience, while they were more immediately under those strong convictions. For, all the people answered  
 Exod. xix. 8. together and said; *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* And in another place;  
 Exod. xxiv. 7. *All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.* Should any of us now living be favoured with any *one* such miraculous revelation of the power and goodness of God towards us, could we ever forget it as long as we live? or, should we not rather,

ther, with the Psalmist, swear and promise SERM. that we would keep God's righteous judgments; and think ourselves in little or no XI. danger of doing otherwise, or falling again into the sins and vanities of this present world? In answer to which, I say, that it is not very likely, if possible, that so remarkable an accident should so slip out of any one's memory as to be entirely forgotten; but that he may forget it in the Scripture sense, so as not to be influenced and engaged by it, to a continued obedience, or perseverance in piety, is not only possible, but, alas! what has been most frequently, and is therefore most likely to be the case; as will further appear in the following discourse. This was the case of the *Israelites*, as it is said of them in the *Psalms*; *They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; but forgot his works and his wonders that he had shewed them.* Psal. lxxviii. 10, 11. Certainly, they could not but remember that they had seen such things; but they did not preserve the impression upon their minds, by daily consideration and practice; nor did they call to mind their own resolutions of obedience, but suffered themselves, through neglect and carelessness, to be led away by their own

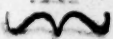
Q hearts



SERM. hearts lust, and so to follow their own inventions.  
 XI.

~~~~~ To prevent this mischief as much as possible by all proper means, *Moses*, who was well acquainted with their proneness to idolatry, and knew the danger they were in, notwithstanding all that God had done for them, gave them this earnest exhortation, in which he frequently makes use of that word of caution, *Take heed*; and particularly in the words of my text; *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.*

As these words very evidently contain that most important duty of diligence and care for the soul, the greatest concern of mankind in general, and of every person in particular, I shall endeavour to make some improvements of them, by proposing to your attention, what obligations or motives there are to engage us to use such care and diligence as is recommended to us in this exhortation; and particularly, that which is intimated in the latter part of the text; *Lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart, all the days of thy life.*

For it implies, that there is great necessity SERM.
of it, arising from the aptness and dispo- XI.
sition there is in us, to forget or lose the 
impressions which spiritual things have
made upon our minds. But the first I
shall speak of, is the obligation which God
has laid upon us by the evidence he has
given of the truth of our religion, and of
what we are to expect if we reject, or if
we comply with it. For when God has
thus provided for our future happiness,
how great must our folly and stupidity be,
if we will not take heed, and use our own
diligence and care for the same purpose!

Now this was the chief design of the
coming of Christ, of the doctrine taught
by him and his Apostles, and of the mi-
racles which they wrought to confirm it:
God sent his Son, that he might, in the
clearest manner, bring life and immorta-
lity to light through the gospel. It will
be needless here to insist upon all the ar-
guments used for the proof of this gospel,
seeing we all make profession of it as the
very truth delivered down to us from those
inspired men, who saw and heard what is
written therein. I shall only speak of it
now, as it lays the same obligation upon
us to attend, believe and practice, as those

SERM. extraordinary miraculous proofs did upon
 XI. the Israelites, to whom the words of the
 { text were spoken; or as the miracles of
 Christ and his Apostles did, upon those
 people who were eye-witnesses of the same.

This will appear, if we consider; That
 no sincere lover of truth and righteousness
 will require more evidence in this
 concern, than is sufficient to determine
 the choice, and direct the actions of a
 wife and good man. So much indeed is
 necessary, and God has provided so much
 for us. For the wisest of men frequently
 pursue their most weighty affairs of life,
 upon less certainty and probability than
 we have for the truth of our religion:
 and many good men make no doubt of it,
 but esteem it most worthy of their time
 and pains: And in these latter ages, since
 miracles have ceased, some (and those not
 a few) have accepted torments and death,
 rather than deny the truth of the gospel;
 and have gone to execution with as great
 steadfastness and alacrity, as those primitive
 martyrs, who were convinced of their re-
 surrection and reward, by the miraculous
 operations of the Holy Ghost.

Greater evidence than this, or such as
 would force the compliance of the most
 idle,

idle, indolent, or obstinate sinner, would SERM.
not so well consist with our present state XI.
of probation, or trial of our faith and love to God. For what reward of his virtue (which in reality would be none at all) could a man expect in such a case? If hell were continually open before his eyes; who would thank him for not stepping into it? But then, on the other hand, if people who profess the gospel, are such lovers of the world and their sins, or so negligent of their souls, that they will not be moved by the evidence of scripture and reason, to take a proper care and pains, and be diligent for their own salvation; 'tis not likely that they would act otherwise, or to better purpose, if they had been convinced by signs and wonders, as the Israelites were. For if such things were not continued, the impression of them would lessen by degrees, and soon wear out of the heart, if not the memory, of such as have no inclination to the truths which they confirm; and if they were continued, they would grow familiar, and be as contemptible in the eye of worldly men, as the scriptures are now.

This was manifestly verified in the Israelites, before whose eyes God had wrought

SERM. so many wonders : they all seemed to be
 XI. convinced, and to promise fairly for the
 ~~~~~ present time ; but such only adhered sted-  
 fastly to the true God, as loved him and  
 took delight in his commandments. And  
 as it was then, so is it now to this day  
 among us, and ever will be, as long as  
 we are in a state of trial ; as long as men  
 have a rational evidence of the truth, it is  
 not the different sort or degree of it which  
 makes them good or bad, but their own  
 disposition, their own diligence or neglect,  
 their own wisdom or folly. This is also  
 confirmed by the authority of Christ him-  
 self ; who, in the parable of the rich  
 Luke xvi. man, affirms, that *if they hear not Moses*  
 31. *and the Prophets, neither will they be per-*  
*swaded though one rose from the dead.* In like  
 manner we may say ; if they will not at-  
 tend to that gospel which they profess to  
 believe, as the Jews did *Moses* and the pro-  
 phets, no other conviction, although mi-  
 raculous, will continue strong enough up-  
 on their memories, to make them con-  
 stantly and uniformly pious and obedient.

People indeed are very apt to condemn  
 the hardness and impenitency of those,  
 who saw the miracles of Christ and his  
 apostles ; and to imagine, that if they  
 themselves

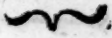
themselves had lived in those days, they SERM.  
 could not possibly have been indifferent or XI.  
 negligent in their religion, when they saw  
 the truth of it confirmed in such a man-  
 ner. But this is a great deceit, proceed-  
 ing from the want of the knowledge of  
 themselves; as it was in those Jews who  
 said, *If we had been in the days of our fathers,* Matt.  
*we would not have been partakers with them* xxiii. 30.  
*in the blood of the prophets;* when they were  
 persecuting at the same time, the greatest  
 of prophets, and one, who, above all  
 others, gave the greatest evidence of his  
 being sent from God. Had they loved his  
 doctrine, less evidence would have served.  
 And thus it is with christians of the pre-  
 sent age; if they love their religion, and  
 are convinced of the truth of it, by argu-  
 ments, sufficient to determine the choice  
 and practice of wise and good men, what  
 need is there of any other? if they do  
 not love their religion, we see that the  
 love of sin, and present indulgence, will  
 suggest excuses enough to render the great-  
 est of all of no effect. Since then, God  
 has not been wanting on his part, to pro-  
 vide for us the means of grace, and to  
 give us the hopes of glory, for which we  
 thank him in our publick prayers, how

SERM. great an obligation must this lay upon

XI. us, to use our own utmost care and diligence? or, *how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*

Secondly; Another great obligation, is the command, or rather, most gracious counsel of God; who proposes it as the one thing needful, the only way we can take to be saved, and what above all other things is not to be neglected. We may neglect many other necessary things, without such infinite damage; but the counsel of the inspired man is this; *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently*; as if all other things were (as indeed they are in comparison) of little or no concern. And as the keeping of our souls is worth all the diligence and care we can take, so likewise all is needful; without it, we shall certainly lose them, although our eyes should have seen what our ears have heard. God himself thought it needful for his servant *Joshua*, notwithstanding all the

Josh. i. 8. *miracles he had seen. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein. Without an habitual meditation, or a daily converse, in spiritual things, it will be*

be to little purpose, to make resolutions SERM.  
of obedience; the motives will drop out XI.  
of our minds, and our duty out of our   
affections.

Many indeed are apt to say, that they can be good christians without so much ado; or without so great interruption of their business and enjoyments. And, without doubt, they think so themselves, or they would not, as long as they are in their senses, neglect an affair of so great concern. But this is also another deceit of sin; and if continued, must lead men into very great hypocrisy; of which I shall speak a word or two more by and by. Sure it is, that the scriptures would not have been so earnest, and frequent in their admonitions as they are, if it were not necessary to our salvation. For God does not lay unnecessary burdens upon his people, but only such things as he knows are for their good. To this purpose is that precept of *Solomon*; *Keep thy heart with all* Prov. iv. 23.  
*diligence*; and truly, all we can bestow, is little enough. Our Saviour likewise com-Mar. xiii. 33.  
mands us, saying; *Take ye heed, watch and*  
*pray*. And again; *what I say unto you, I* Ver. 37.  
*say unto all; watch.*

What



SERM. What the wise man speaks of wisdom

XI. or virtue; that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, is very true; and people would not want so much care and discipline to engage them to walk therein, if they were not so much obscured and disturbed as they are, by the wickedness and bad examples of the world, and men's own lusts and passions. And hence it is, that God has most graciously interposed his counsel and authority, as the only remedy and means to support men in their duty: but if they will not attend to it in earnest, and put it in practice, how desirable soever a life of virtue may be in itself, sin dwelling in them will soon get the upper hand, and God's authority and counsel, being little regarded, will be of no more use than if it had never been revealed.

In the first chapter to the *Hebrews*, St. *Paul*, having spoken of God's revelations, at sundry times, and in divers manners, and particularly of the authority of the Son of God, by whom the gospel was revealed, makes this inference, in words very like to those of my text: *Therefore*,  
 Chap. ii. 1. says he, *we ought to take the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest*  
 at

at any time we should let them slip. Or, as SERM.  
Moses, *Left thou forget the things which* XI.  
*thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from*  
*thy heart all the days of thy life.* And these  
last words, both of the apostle and the pro-  
phet, intimate to us another very parti-  
cular obligation or motive to use our ut-  
most diligence in the care of our souls; as  
they imply the necessity there is of it, ari-  
sing from the aptness or disposition there  
is in us to forget or lose the impressions  
which spiritual things have made upon our  
minds. *Therefore take heed to thyself, and*  
*keep thy soul diligently, lest (according to*  
*the corrupt disposition of mankind) thou*  
*forget the things which thine eyes have seen,*  
*and lest they depart from thy heart all the days*  
*of thy life:* which now, in the third place,  
I shall endeavour to improve.

And first; That there is in mankind a  
great aptness or disposition to lose the im-  
pressions which spiritual things have made  
upon their minds, is a truth which cannot  
be unknown to every christian, who has  
made any, though but small reflexions,  
upon his own heart and life. But, if it  
be, our Saviour will assure him of it, in  
the parable of the sower; where he tells Matt. xiii.  
us, that *the wicked one, or Satan, cometh* 19.  
*and*

SERM. *and taketh away the word which was sown in*

XI. *their hearts.* For, we must not suppose  
~~~~~ that the devil has power to rob mankind  
of that precious seed, whether they will
or no; for then none but the devil himself
could be blame-worthy. But the truth is,
his power over us is only by our own con-
sent, and all that he can do, is to stir up
in our minds, upon all occasions, the
agreeable thoughts of the honours and
pleasures, the sports and vanities of the
world, or the profits of our farm and
merchandise; or to fill our hearts with de-
sires of particular forbidden objects, and
then to prompt us with wicked contrivances
how we may accomplish such desires.
Our Maker indeed has endued us with
reason and conscience, which if duly at-
tended to, would undoubtedly prevail
against all such suggestions; but we see
by experience, that men are rather apt to
follow and be led by them: so that, with-
out a continued daily practice, how deep
soever the word has been sown in their
hearts, or whatsoever impressions it has
there made, all will vanish, or wear out
and come to nothing. This is what Christ
would have us understand, when he tells
us the devil comes and takes it away;
signify-

signifying thereby, in the strongest man-SERM.
ner, the certainty of our destruction by XI.
our own neglect ; and that the preaching ~~~~~
of the gospel, and all the convictions and
good resolutions it has produced in us, will
be of no more use or profit to us, than
such goods can be, of which an enemy
has robbed us, or which we never had.

Secondly ; Religion is indeed not only
most agreeable to the nature, the under-
standing, and reason of men, but the
highest and most important concern in the
world ; and therefore no account can be
given why men, who have been convinced,
and acknowledge the truth of it, should
be so careless of it, or so little under its
power and direction, as we see it happens
in the christian world, but that they
wholly forget the convictions of their own
reason and conscience, and the impressions
made thereby on their hearts ; or at least
habitually disregard them, so as to lose
their force, and render them of no use or
advantage. They would not be such fools
as to prefer the momentary pleasures of
sin before their eternal happiness, if all
the sad consequences of such folly, and
the certain evils it will produce, were
present before their eyes upon all occasions.

But

SERM. But the great opposition there is between

XI. the flesh and the spirit ; or the law of the members warring against the law of the mind, begets a secret aversion to the instructions of wisdom, and all reproofs and restraints of religion ; and what men hate, they care not to retain long in their memories, and much less to conform to it, in their practice. 'Tis well known how apt time is to wear out all impressions which outward things have made upon us, if they are not frequently renewed, or stirred up afresh in our minds : And if to this natural effect of time, we add the innumerable avocations and seductions from a religious life, which proceed from the things of the world, and men's own heart's lust, always apt to turn away from restraint ; it is morally impossible but that the strongest convictions they receive from spiritual things, must shortly wear out, and be forgotten, if they are not industriously preserved by a daily care and watchfulness.

But thirdly ; Supposing they may not be totally forgotten, so as to have no influence at all upon the life and conversation ; as indeed is sometimes the case with people who have retentive memories, and
are

are by nature tender and religiously disposed; yet, if such people will not be in earnest with themselves in using their utmost diligence in the care of their souls, but neglect to stir up what is in them, by practice; whatsoever convincing arguments for the truth and necessity of religion, they have heard with their ears, or even seen with their eyes, they will be of no better use than to incline them to superstition, partial obedience and hypocrisy; and thus will they serve, not for the salvation, but the deceiving of men's souls.

And of this too, we are forewarned by our Saviour, in the fore-mentioned parable of the sower, in that particular instance of the seed which fell among thorns: in which, are represented such people as have heard the word, and so far considered it, as to make resolutions of repentance. But they are said to *go forth*, i. e. neglect or go from it, and apply to the world; and consequently, to be choaked or overcome with cares and riches, and pleasures of this life, and to bring no fruit to perfection. The good seed, or the religious principles which they have imbibed, for want of a continued diligent practice, and much more by a too fervent application to other things,
grow

SERM. grow feeble, and have not strength to

XI. make their obedience uniform and perfect.

They obey in part, but are too much in love with the world, and their own will and pleasure, to be altogether christians. This appears too often in the behaviour of many, who, by the respect they shew to religion or the service of God, and by their own private devotions, persuade themselves that they are, and imagine that other people esteem them as, sincerely devout and pious. But the contrary is manifest enough, in that they mispend their time, and comply too much with the idle and vain customs of the world; upon which they are more apt to lean, than upon the favour of God. They are so far from loving their enemies, that they hate, malign and backbite, not only such as are really so, but every one who has given them any disgust, whether right or wrong; and among these, the most friendly and sincere reprovers of their faults. But these things are too common in practice, to be looked upon as sins, although they are plainly opposite to the rules of our christian profession: and therefore, if they will not convince such people of their hypocrisy, it seldom happens, but they may have

have further intelligence of themselves up-
on due reflection. For, as nothing but
an habitual regard to the all-seeing eye of
God, can render a man upon every occa-
sion, strictly honest and just; so they who
want it, notwithstanding their pretences
to piety, will not scruple, when advantage
offers, or when 'tis necessary to their world-
ly designs, to lie and conceal the truth;
to cheat and defraud, and even oppress, ac-
cording to their power and opportunity;
and more especially will they do these things,
when they are necessary, not only for pro-
fit, but for revenge upon such as they
mark for the objects of their hate.

How bewitching then is the deceitful-
ness of sin! and how prone must the
heart of man be, to relapse and err in spi-
ritual things, when people in such a con-
dition, can think themselves truly just and
charitable! and that they love God with
all their hearts, and their neighbour as
themselves! But besides this; unless peo-
ple will awake in earnest to a life of real
christianity in all its parts, they must of
necessity grow worse and worse; and make
good the proverb, in which *Solomon* tells
us; *That slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;*
i. e. into a state of insensibility, or forget-
fulness

Prov.
xix. 15.

SERM. fulness of God and their own souls. The

XI. inconstancy, or aptness of men to fall from
 ~~~~~ their holy purposes and resolutions, is am-  
 ply set forth in scripture, by way of cau-  
 tion, or to shew the necessity there is of  
 the utmost diligence and watchfulness, for  
 the soul's security. Their *goodness* is com-

Hos. vi. 4 pared to *the morning cloud*, and said to go  
*away like the early dew*. And this too is  
 applied particularly to a people, of whom  
 God declares, that he had done all that  
 could be done for their salvation : so that  
 his wisdom is represented by the prophet,  
 as if it was at a stand ; *O Ephraim, what*  
*shall I do unto thee ? O Judah, what shall I*  
*do unto thee ?* Which manifestly implies,  
 that if men will be careless and negli-  
 gent of their own salvation, all that the  
 wisdom and goodness of God can do for  
 them, will have no better effect, than to  
 prove them guilty of their own destruc-  
 tion.

Lastly, and to conclude this discourse,  
 I shall only add, by way of encourage-  
 ment, to all who shall think fit to attend,  
 that since God has provided the means of  
 salvation, and requires of us our own care  
 and diligence as necessary thereunto, we  
 may be sure, that if we reject not his  
 counsel

counsel and authority, we shall obtain the SERM.  
 desired end; and that *our labour will not be* **XI.**  
*in vain in the Lord.* It would be very un- 1 Cor. xv. 58.  
 reasonable, and even blasphemous, to think  
 that God should point out a way to hap-  
 piness, which would not lead us to it ;  
 or that what he proposes, should be insuf-  
 ficient for its purpose. The scriptures  
 are full of his declarations and promises  
 to the contrary, as every diligent reader  
 may find. He has promised that he will  
 render all our sincere endeavours effectual,  
 by assisting our weakness, and pardoning  
 our imperfections. We are put in mind  
 of our weakness and inconstancy, not to  
 discourage our endeavours, but to shew the  
 necessity of using them with all our dili-  
 gence and strength. If we look only to  
 ourselves, we may indeed cry out with the  
 disciples, *who then can be saved?* but with  
 God all things are possible; and 'tis He  
*who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not* Psal. lxxvi.  
*our feet to be moved.* *He will be our guide* 9.  
*unto death.* And that which God said to xlvi. 14.  
*Joshua*, is by the apostle applied to all true  
 christians; *I will never leave thee nor forsake* Heb. xiii.  
*thee.* 5.

Therefore, having these and many more  
 such like promises from him who is very

SERM. faithfulness and truth itself, and cannot

XI. possibly fail or deceive us; let it be the first  
 and greatest care of our life (as the apos-

<sup>2</sup> Cor.  
 vii. 1.

*tle exhorts) to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* The consideration of the nature of God, as well as his revealed declarations and promises, may satisfy us that it is not possible for any of those to come short of salvation, who commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator.

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## The benefit of an early exercise.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 27.

*It is good for a man, that he bear the yoke  
in his youth.*

THE holy prophet, who was the SERM.  
author of these words, had been XII.  
exercised with much affliction, ~  
both in his own person, and in the calamities of his people; which gave occasion for this book of Lamentations. He was likewise well versed in the discipline of religion, a priest and an instructor of the people; and upon these accounts, his counsel had been very worthy of our attention, if he had not been endued, as he was, with a prophetic spirit: But much more ought we to hearken to it, when it comes with the authority of the Holy Ghost. He tells us, *it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*; or (as it is otherwise translated) that he *bath* born the yoke in his youth; intimating, that he

R 3 will



SERM. will have the advantage of it in a more  
XII. advanced age.

By the *yoke*, interpreters understand either the chastisement of affliction, or the discipline and instructions of religion; the former of which is, sooner or later, the general lot of all people; and the other absolutely necessary for their happiness and salvation. The former indeed seems to be more immediately meant by the prophet, as it is the main subject of his discourse, but the other cannot but be understood, because, without it, the words will have but little force or truth in them; it being not likely that a young man should be much better for what he suffers, if he has not been instructed in the design of Providence, and the use which he ought to make of it.

Both these therefore being included, christians may understand by this yoke, that obligation which they have taken upon them to suffer patiently the will of God, as well as to learn and obey his commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life. Not only in their old age, when they are scarce able to walk at all; but while they have strength  
and

and vigour to employ in the service of their SERM.  
Maker. XII.

The general notion of a yoke, indeed, implies in it hard labour, restraint and suffering; to which youth has, not without reason, no small aversion: But that young men may not be terrified, or discouraged by a name, let us hear what opinion our Lord had of it, who had born it himself, and calls us to it with a most kind and pathetic invitation. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.* Matt. xi. 28. He that is a christian indeed, and does really believe that these are the words of the Son of God, may, without any other reason, be satisfied that they are true; and if he has but so much faith as to put them in practice, his own experience will, in time, oblige him to subscribe to the words of the prophet here in my text; *It is good for a man, that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

It is certain, that no arguments or instructions can have such force on the mind, as experience has; but they are the best expedients to supply the want of it, and

SERM. proper to prevail upon rational creatures :

XII. Nor can they fail to have some good effect  
 at least, upon such young people, as are  
 so wise and honest to themselves, in their  
 greatest concern, as to give them a fair  
 hearing and attention; and not suffer  
 themselves to be led away entirely, by their  
 present appetites and passions. It may be  
 of use therefore, to consider more particu-  
 larly, in what respect *it is good for a man*  
*that he bear this yoke in his youth* ; which I  
 shall endeavour,

First, as it relates to sufferings ; and,

Secondly, To the study and practice of  
 the will of God.

Job v. 6. And first, If we consider that *affliction*  
*cometh not forth of the dust, nor springs out*  
*of the ground*, as 'tis said in the book of  
 Job, *i. e.* does not come by mere chance,  
 or without reason and design ; but from  
 the fatherly hand of God, who doth not  
 afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of  
 men ; but men by their folly and wicked-  
 ness make it necessary, and bring it upon  
 themselves : I say, if we consider this, we  
 must own, that affliction is good in the  
 main, both for young and old, according  
 as the divine wisdom shall think fit. What  
 christian indeed would wish to be entirely  
 free

free from it, when he hears the apostle SERM.  
declaring, that *whom the Lord loveth, he* **XII.**  
*chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he*  
*receiveth?* But, nevertheless, as the same Heb. xii.  
6.  
Apostle observes, *no chastening for the pre-* Ver. 11.  
*sent, seemeth to be joyous but grievous;* and  
grievous it is no doubt, to nature, so that  
no philosophy or religion can make us  
look upon it, as it is in itself, to be other-  
wise than evil, though it may be attended  
with a far more exceeding good.

Now, therefore, if we consider this as  
the general lot of all men, which sooner  
or later, they must undergo; and that it  
has in it, a mixture of good and evil;  
the fittest time for it (were it put to our  
choice) must be in youth, when the evil  
will be less, and the good, in all likelihood,  
be more abundantly increased. The evil  
will be less at that time, because, if any  
thing can make those troubles and afflic-  
tions, to which our present life is subject,  
easy and tolerable, it must be use and ex-  
ercise. They are more grievous to a young  
man at first, for want of that use; but  
then, they will be much more so, in an  
advanced age, when both the body and  
mind have been softened and unprepared  
by a contrary usage, or an entire freedom  
from



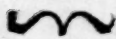
SERM. from pain, sickness and poverty. It is  
XII. well known, that such men as are designed  
for a life of hardship and toil, are best  
fitted for it, by an early exercise; by which  
means they are enabled to undergo, even  
in old age, what otherwise would hardly  
be possible to nature. The case is the same  
with respect to involuntary sufferings,  
which by custom and use become less af-  
flictive, but always fall the heavier, the  
longer they have been deferred. How  
grievous and bitter are pains and a sick  
bed, to a person who has been unaccus-  
tomed to the burden of such things? He  
is more sensible of their effects, and his  
affliction is generally doubled by his impa-  
tience; for it is not likely that patience  
should have her perfect work, till men  
have for some time, been acquainted with  
sufferings. Very miserable likewise is that  
state of life, which is changed from better  
to worse; or poverty unexpected, and  
fallen upon those who have formerly lived  
in plenty and prosperity. We generally  
look upon such with an eye of more pity,  
and count them the fittest objects of our  
charity and relief. And yet, if we consider  
the greatest of all their wants, is the want  
of being accustomed to that low condition  
of

of life, into which they are unexpectedly fallen. This is true, because we see other men contented, and happy in the same state, who yet have the same necessities of nature to supply. It may therefore be some comfort to young people, when it shall please God to bring them into streights and afflictions, to consider, that if they are designed for a life of sufferings, 'tis better that it should begin in youth, than in old age, when they will be less able to endure it; or if, on the contrary, they expect (as they very well may) more happy days, their enjoyments will be the greater, and they themselves better prepared for a life of prosperity; which otherwise might probably prove a curse rather than a blessing.

And as the evil of affliction will be less in youth, the good will, in all likelihood, be more abundantly increased. It consists, as the apostle tells us, in this; That it *yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them, who are exercised thereby.* The sooner therefore it begins to produce such fruits, the greater will be the increase. An early, painful, and pious christian must, in old age, enjoy much more of that peace and comfort, and receive

SERM.  
XII.  
Heb. xii.  
11.

SERM. receive a greater reward than one who has

XII.  spent the better part of his life in vanity and sin, although he should be so happy as to repent at last; which indeed is very rare and unlikely. Moreover, as young men are most subject to vanity, they have more need of such sensible warnings, to draw their attention; and then too those warnings are most likely to prevail upon them, before they are hardened, and become, as old men generally are, self-willed and intractable, not easy to be taught, or turned out of their accustomed ways. The snares of youth, and that which supports young people in sin, are a vigorous and healthy constitution, joined with a supply of wealth; an eager application to the world, and an unwarrantable expectation of happiness from it. Against which, we find by experience, that human eloquence, or the enticing words of man's wisdom, can make but a very feeble and fruitless opposition. Young men are proof against preaching, and lectures of philosophy; and unless the good providence of God interpose with the more prevailing arguments of his rod, there is little hopes of attention, and much less of amendment. But misfortunes, sickness, pain and want, though

though they come with a still voice, are SERM.  
such sons of thunder as will not easily be XII.  
resisted. They stop a man in his mad  
carrier by force, and make him sensible  
how ill he is prepared for a sensual and  
worldly happiness: they allay the heat of  
youth, and imbitter the pleasures of sin;  
and by turning the mind to a serious  
thought, do, in some measure, supply that  
wisdom, which only age and experience  
can bring to perfection.—Let not then  
the youth, who is so like his Saviour, as  
to be *a man of sorrows and acquainted  
with grief*, imagine that he is, for that  
reason, less dear to God, or forsaken of  
him; let him not be uneasy, nor envy  
those his equals, who are happy in the  
eye of the world, and entangled in the  
snares of it: but rather, let him rejoyce  
that he is in a fair way to escape, and that  
he bears in his person, the tokens of a  
legitimate son of that father, by whom he  
is chastened at present, that he may not  
be condemned with the world. For by  
these means, God shews that he is jealous  
over him, lest he set his heart upon the  
world; and that his design is, in the  
strongest manner, to secure him to himself.

That



SERM. That this is God's method of dealing

XII. with those who are the special objects of his favour; we learn, not only from the forementioned place of St. Paul, but from all places of scripture which say any thing to that purpose. Our Saviour, in the Revelations, teaches the same doctrine;

Rev. iii. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

19.

And the wise man in his proverbs; *Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth.* It was the particular regard, which God had to the children of Israel, which brought down

Am. iii. his judgments upon them; *You only have I*

2.

*known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* And the prophet Hosea speaks of this, as the last, and most effectual remedy, when

Hof. v. nothing else will prevail; *I will go and*

15.

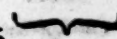
*return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.* And thus the Psal-

Ps. lxxviii. mist tells us, that *when he slew them they*

34.

*sought him.* And when they were carried away into captivity, they remembered Sion, by the waters of Babylon, though perhaps they never thought upon it even in Sion itself.

If

If then the scripture speaks not these SERM.  
words in vain, or if people do not despise XII.  
them as untrue, or words of no weight;   
they will not faint at the rebukes of God,  
but rather thank him, for giving them an  
early warning; as an early warning is most  
likely to prevail, and to yield a greater  
measure of the fruits of righteousness.

But as this relates chiefly to a future state,  
which to young people, is apt to seem at a  
very great distance, and therefore to make  
little impression on their minds; we may  
add, by way of comfort and encourage-  
ment, that God does not always confine  
the rewards of hardship and sufferings  
to another life; but by those very means,  
often brings them who honour him, to  
honour in this present world. This will  
best appear by examples, of which we  
have several in the scriptures, and other  
history; and many more, I believe, may  
be seen by men of observation, in their  
own times. When God designed his fa-  
vourite Joseph to be ruler over the land of  
Egypt, he took him early out of the hands  
of a fond parent, that he might undergo  
those sufferings, which prepared him for  
his future greatness. His life had hardly  
been so glorious, if he had not been first a  
slave

SERM. slave and a prisoner; if his feet had not  
 XII. been hurt in the stocks, nor the iron entered  
 into his soul.—How great were the difficul-

Pf. cv.  
 18.

ties, dangers and troubles of David, before  
 he could be settled on the throne of Israel?

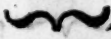
His predecessor Saul came to it a much  
 easier way, and prospered not; but David  
 was the man after God's own heart; and

Pf. cxix.

71.

he himself confesses, that *it was good for him*  
*to have been afflicted.*

The prophet Daniel, by being carried  
 away captive into a strange land, when  
 he was young, and being envied, hated  
 and persecuted by his idolatrous enemies  
 in the Babylonian court, became the  
 greatest of the princes of that realm: of  
 whom the angel testified, that he was a  
 man greatly beloved. And seldom indeed  
 does God permit a virtuous and good  
 man, to arrive at worldly greatness, or a  
 prosperous old age, except he has first  
 been prepared for it, by labour and suf-  
 ferings in his youth. The want of such  
 preparation is, for the most part, the oc-  
 casion that other men, when they prosper  
 in the world, get nothing better by that  
 means, than a greater power to do mis-  
 chief, a larger scope of wickedness, and  
 consequently, a greater fall into misery.

Streights and disappointments in youth, SERM.  
as they are an early weaning from the XII.  
world, so, by making a man industrious,   
humble, and modest, they have a tendency  
to bring him to a better fortune; and to  
fit him for a just and reasonable use and  
enjoyment of it. Whereas, the young  
man who has health and prosperity, with  
the deceitful prospect of worldly happiness  
in his eye, is more apt to forsake the guide  
of his youth, and his trust in God; and  
to bend all his thoughts and endeavours to  
secure himself from want or misfortune  
merely by his own skill and policy; as if,  
like the builders of Babel, he would fence  
against providence; and then 'tis no won-  
der, if like them too, he is confounded with  
a stroke.—And thus, having said what  
may be sufficient for the present purpose,  
concerning the yoke, as it relates to suffer-  
ings, or submission to God's will of provi-  
dence, and of the great good, which may  
arise from an early exercise therein,

I come now, in the second place, to  
speak of it, as it relates to his will of  
precept, or to the study and practice of  
our duty as christians.

And of this we may say, not only, with  
the Prophet, that *it is good for a man, that*

S

he



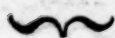
SERM. *he bear it in his youth*, but also, that it is his  
 XII. indispensable duty, and highly necessary

~~~~~ to secure his happiness; or, according to  
 St. Peter, *to make his calling and election sure.*
 This is a yoke which does not imply
 in it any hard labour or unnecessary re-
 straint, but what our Saviour calls his own,
 and assures us that 'tis both easy and light:
 not only in comparison of the bondage and
 slavery of sin, but 'tis a yoke or law of
 love, and a service of perfect freedom,
 which no man would refuse, if he was not
 unacquainted with it. Here, indeed, lies
 the greatest difficulty and impediment: It
 is not to be known all at once; men can-
 not, without some patience and practice,
 be made thoroughly sensible what it is, or
 of the happiness it contains. Temperance,
 soberness, and chastity, with meekness
 and lowliness of heart, are not easily to be
 learned and relished, as long as the pas-
 sions, pride and sensuality of youth stand
 between, and scare away such unwelcome
 thoughts from the heart. Thus the son of
 Sirach speaks of the divine wisdom; *At*
 Eccl. iv. *the first, she will walk with him by crooked*
 17. 18. *ways, and bring fear and dread upon him,*
and torment him with her discipline, until she
may trust his soul, and try him by her laws:

then will she return the straight way unto SERM.
him, and comfort him, and shew him her XII.
secrets. And why is it called the secrets of

wisdom, but that it is hidden from the knowledge of such fools as are too carnally minded, or too indolent to attain unto it? The case in general is this; young men imagine that they can learn it at any time, at their leisure, as well as now; and when they are older, and have run themselves almost irrecoverably out of its way, they then find it so difficult, that they had rather study how to cheat themselves, and fancy that it is either not necessary, or not practicable. But how unhappy is it, that they can be so sensible, that there is no art, science, or trade, but what requires an early exercise and diligence, if they will practise it to any advantage or with success; and yet be so stupid as to think that the greatest knowledge of all, the main business for which they came into the world, could be attained to, at any time of life, without any preparation in youth; or without any difficulty at all; as if that meat which perisheth must cost, and be thought worth so much labour and pains, and yet that which endures to everlasting

SERM. lasting life, would even drop into their
XII. mouths!



But this, I say, as absurd as it is, seems to be the general notion of young people, from the highest to the lowest; not only of such as are weak or half-witted, but of such as, in other affairs, have great strength of mind and judgment, and can carry on the business of their calling with good success, according to their degree or condition in the world. From hence then we may be made sensible what great power there is in sin, to make wise men fools in their notions of religion; to turn that light which is in them into darkness; and then, how great is that darkness? So great, that there is hardly any thing so mean, low, weak, and contrary to common sense, but men will have recourse to it, by way of refuge, rather than submit to that yoke which Christ offers with so kind an invitation: or undertake, in earnest, that most reasonable and necessary duty, which God and their own consciences are continually calling upon them to do.

Again: As young people imagine they can become virtuous, and enter upon a religious life, when they please, by an easy transition from one to the other; so they
are

are apt, as erroneously, to judge that old age is the fittest time for it, as being more agreeable to the severity of its precepts. They think that the gaiety, and volatile temper of youth, is more adapted to the pleasures of sense; and that it is hard for them to be denied those enjoyments, which are then so natural to them, and which they design to lay aside at a more convenient season.

Now, although there is great deceit in this, yet there seems to be something of truth in it. For it is not to be expected that young people should behave with that gravity and contempt of the world, which is more proper for old age. There are innocent pleasures and diversions, which are allowable, and even necessary for them; but if they will so far give their minds to them, as to put off the fear of God, and to walk in the sight of their own eyes, the wise man would have them know, that *for these things, God will bring them into judgment.* If they would live and die in the favour of God, 'tis necessary for them to engage early in the service of Christ, which is the best way to make his yoke easy and his burden light. Therefore the advice of the divine Preacher, is, *to remember*

SERM.

XII.

Ecclef. xi.

9.

SERM. *thy Creator in the days of thy youth* ; for which

XII. there are more reasons than can be spoken
all at once, or upon every occasion ; but
the greatest of all is, that, if it is not done
at that time, 'tis a hundred to one if it is
ever done at all.

Let them then despise the clamours of
old men which proceed chiefly from pee-
vishness or moroseness, and the envy of
those pleasures which they cannot enjoy
themselves ; but yet, all the advantages of
age and experience, are not to be made
void, and rejected for that reason : much
less is that counsel which comes with au-
thority, and from the pen of an old ex-
perienced prophet, as in the words of my
text ; *It is good for a man that he bear the
yoke in his youth.* He knew it to be good,
for several reasons ; of which I shall briefly
add two or three to what has been said,
and so conclude.

First ; It is good to ease that yoke of
afflictions, which may come upon a man
whither he will or no. Sickness, poverty,
and other calamities approach unawares,
like an armed man, or as the messengers
of the Almighty, and are not to be resisted
by any health, wealth, or strength which
men may be masters of. And if, upon
such

such occasions, they have no hope but in SERM.
their worldly views, such things must have XII.
a full stroke at them, and make them most
exquisitely miserable. Whereas, if a per-
son is prepared before hand, by a volun-
tary undertaking the yoke of Christ, and
submission to the will of God; his own
patience will more than take off half the
burden; as the prophet intimates in the
words following; *He sitteth alone and keepeth* Ver. 28.
silence, or is patient because he hath borne it
upon him. And how little will be the evil,
if we add to this, the assurance that these
afflictions will turn to the greatest good?
For the Lord will not cast off for ever; but is Ver. 31.
good unto them that wait for him, and to the Ver. 25.
soul that seeketh him.

Secondly, 'Tis good to avoid those in-
numerable ill effects which sin and debauch-
ery necessarily bring upon all those who
have given themselves up to it, and, by
degrees, are become slaves to the devil and
their own lusts. These not only render a
man unfit to undergo the evils of life, but
force the worst of those evils upon him,
and such, as otherwise he would never
have known. A weak and crazy body,
with a hunger-starved soul; sorrow of
heart, and a late repentance, are almost

SERM. the certain consequences of a licentious

XII. youth. And thus a man goes through
 ~~~~~ more tribulation to the kingdom of darkness, than he could have met with in his way to heaven, if he had had but sense and courage enough in his youth, to have undertaken his duty, and to have borne that yoke which, at the worst, had been but a light and momentary affliction, in comparison of those intolerable and irreparable evils, which attend the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil. If, according to the counsel of the divine preacher, a man would *remove sorrow from his heart, and put away evil from the flesh*; the way to do it, is not by shifting off his duty, and aiming at a life of pleasure and ease; but his counsel is this; *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: and therefore, in respect to those days, I say,*

Ecc. xi.  
10.

xii. 1.

Thirdly and lastly; That *it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*, because peace of mind, and a happy old age are not to be expected, nor possibly to be obtained, by any other means. For,  
 whether

whether a man's days be prosperous or SERM.  
not, his old age is capable of very little XII.  
pleasure from the world. He cannot en-  
joy his wealth any otherwise than by  
possession or increase; or by feeding those  
eyes which are unable to look upwards and  
behold better things.

And this is the reason, why worldly  
old men naturally bow down to that  
Idol, as their only refuge and support;  
and yet 'tis so far from happiness, that  
the common sense of mankind has given  
it a quite contrary name; so that the  
utmost enjoyment they can have pro-  
ceeds from their own ignorance, and in-  
sensibility that they are very miserable.

Nor can they expect much happi-  
ness in this life, even from repentance it-  
self; which, if ever they should be so  
wise as to undertake it in earnest, can  
afford, in old age, but little comfort or  
peace of mind. The psalmist says, indeed,  
*that they have great peace, who love the law* Pf. cxix.  
*of God, and nothing shall offend them:* but 165.  
it is not to be expected that they should  
so love that law all at once, who have so  
long lived in friendship with the world, and  
the service of sin.

If



SERM. 10 If such late repentance can find mercy

XII. at last (as, without doubt, it will, if it be followed with real amendment) yet, it is attended with so many evils, weakneses, and imperfections, that little hopes or assurance can arise from it. The horrible remembrance of a whole life spent in sin and vanity, and the reluctancy of a corrupt nature grown strong by the habits of vice, must create great anxiety, doubts, and fears, if not despair itself; all which cannot fail to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

And now, what can I say more to those young people, who have it in their power to prevent these evils, but that they would set about it without delay? That, if they desire peace at the last, when they can enjoy nothing else, they must now keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right. Unto which, let us add that passionate wish of Moses; *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

Pf. xxxvii.  
38.

Deut.  
xxxii. 29.

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Of eating and drinking the flesh and  
blood of Christ.

JOHN vi. 53.

—Jesus said unto them, *Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

SEEING God has been pleased to SERM.  
make use of parables, and other XIII.  
figures of speech, in his instruction  
of mankind, according to the prophet Ho-  
sea, *I have used similitudes*; and the Psalmist, Hof. xii.  
*I will open my mouth in a parable, I will ut-* 10.  
*ter dark sayings of old*: which the Evange- Pf. lxxviii.  
list applies to Jesus Christ; it must, as So- 2.  
lomon says, be part of true wisdom, *to un-* Matt. xiii.  
*derstand a proverb and the interpretation;* 35.  
*the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*  
For such figurative speeches, as they are  
very useful to explain doctrines, and im-  
print them on the minds of the hearers;  
so are they very liable to be misunderstood  
by

SERM. by weak, and perverted by wicked men;

XIII. especially when they are spoken at any  
 { great distance of time and place, to people who are unacquainted with the forms of speech and allusions, which were then and there in use.

And thus it has happened to the words of the text; *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* No man pretends to understand these words in a literal sense, but they only who would countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation; for it cannot indeed be so understood, but by transubstantiation itself: and, being so great an absurdity, and an enemy to all truth, it must be needless, in this place, to spend any time about it. The dispute then is not whether these words are a figure or not, but what their literal meaning is, or to what they refer. And therefore my business at present shall be,

First, To explain the words of the text; and,

Secondly, To shew what use we may, and ought to make of it.

And first; From the analogy there is between the doctrine here taught by Christ, and the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, and

and from the use of the same words, many people have unwarily understood them to refer to that sacrament; which could not be, did they duly consider the reasons or arguments produced on the contrary; of which, I think, I need mention only two or three.

The first is; That the sacrament of the Lord's supper was not instituted, or known of, till, at least, a year after this discourse; and that being a mere positive institution, there was no reason or ground in nature for the people to understand what our Saviour meant, unless he had before instructed them in his design of that institution. But there is no appearance that he had, nor any reason to imagine it, but very much to the contrary. The Evangelist must have said something of it, especially if, as it has been said, he gave us the history of this discourse, with design to explain upon the sacrament: he must, I say, have said something of it, by way of explanation, which he did not fail to do upon a less necessary occasion. For, in the next chapter, where Christ speaks of the Holy Ghost, by the metaphor of living water, the Evangelist immediately thus explains; *This he spake of the spirit, which* Ver. 39  
*they*



SERM. *they that believe on Him should receive: for*  
 XIII. *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that*  
 ~~~~~ *Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Secondly; If the words refer to the sacrament, they are not true; and therefore they ought not, by any means, to be so understood. There is not a more absolute asseveration in the whole scripture; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* And yet many people, we hope, have been saved, who never did eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ, in a sacramental way. The thief upon the cross, is an example of one who never did; and yet, if we will take Christ's word for it, he is among the blessed. The same doctrine will be found true, if we take the words positively, as they are expressed in the next verse: *Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;* whereas, many eat and drink thereof sacramentally, who are very far from eternal life. In short, 'tis manifest that Christ here speaks of something absolutely necessary to salvation, whereas, the church rightly observes, that sacraments are only generally so. By a brief reflection on the argument and design of the whole discourse,

course, we shall best see what is aimed at SERM.
by the particular words of the text. XIII.

The general design of all our Lord's discourses, and miracles which he wrought, was to convince the Jews, that he was the Messiah or Christ; that they might believe on him, hear and obey what he taught, and have life through his name. And his design is nothing else in this place. After he had wrought the miracle of the loaves, He takes occasion from thence to discourse of himself and his doctrine; as his custom was, from any outward and visible things, as they occurred, to talk to the people of such spiritual things, as those outward things were proper to represent. Thus, from the water of Jacob's well, he takes occasion to speak of that living water, which springs up into everlasting life; by which he means the holy spirit of sanctification. Now, our bodies being nourished, and our lives preserved, by meat and drink, it was very common with the Jews, as well as other nations, to call their instructions of wisdom, or their precepts of morality and virtue, or any thing by which the soul is nourished or improved, by metaphorical names, taken from meat and drink. And therefore such metaphors,

SERM. taphors, as they were proper in themselves,
 XIII. and very expressive of the things signified

by them, *i. e.* the food of souls; so were they particularly proper to instruct those people, to whom they were so familiar. They are frequently found in their writings; and even the holy scriptures, with which we are better acquainted, have examples of them. Thus, in the Proverbs,

Prov. ix. 5. we find Wisdom crying; *Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.* By which, she means her discipline and doctrine. And the prophet *Isaiab* means the same, and invites to the instructions of wisdom and virtue, when

Ifai. lv. he says, *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come*
 1, 2. *ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Which is almost the same, as what Christ says in the beginning of this discourse; *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to eternal life.* And here, it is very plain, that the Jews understood,
 by

by meat, the means of everlasting life; SERM.
for they immediately enquire what they XIII.
should do on that account, saying, *What* ~
shall we do, that we may work the works of
God? To this question our Lord answers
literally and in plain terms, *This is the*
work of God, that ye believe on him, whom
he hath sent. i. e. That ye believe me to be
the Christ, and consequently be obedient
to the will of God, as I instruct you.
This was the main point; and the Jews,
as they were wont, require a sign, and
mention the miraculous eating of manna
in the wilderness, as superior to any thing
that Christ had done. For they looked
upon that as a sign from heaven; whereas,
the miracle of the loaves was only wrought
upon earth. And, in confirmation of
their argument, they quote the Psalmist;
As it is written, He gave them bread from Ps. lxxviii.
heaven to eat. In answer to this, Christ 25.
assures them, that Moses did not give them
that bread from Heaven: meaning that
spiritual bread, which was ultimately aim-
ed at by the Psalmist, in a figurative sense.
For the literal manna Moses certainly did
give them; but that being only typical of
what God designed in after-ages, by send-
ing his Son; in opposition to it, Christ
T says,

SERM. says, *My Father now giveth you the true*
 XIII. *bread from heaven. For the bread of God*
 ~~~~~ *is he that cometh down from heaven, and*  
*giveth life to the world; which no typical*  
*manna, or sacramental bread can do.*

After some digression, occasioned by the Jew's murmuring and unbelief, He again resumes the argument, at the forty-seventh verse, and asserts; *Verily, verily, I say unto you; He that believeth in me hath everlasting life*; and immediately adds, *I am that bread of life*. And again; *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever*. By which 'tis easy to see, that believing on Christ, or obeying the gospel (as believing there signifies) and eating of the bread of life, are the same thing, having the same reward absolutely annexed unto them, *viz.* everlasting life.

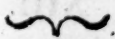
And here we must observe, that, when Christ speaks of the benefits which mankind were to receive by him, he very frequently calls himself that very thing spoken of. Thus because he came to shew us the right way; to preach the truth of God; and to give life to the world; He

John xiv. says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*  
 6. As he came to give spiritual light or knowledge

ledge to mankind; He says, *I am the light* SERM.  
*of the world.* So here, in the same man- XIII.  
ner, and with the same propriety of speech, ~  
as he came to give us spiritual bread, or  
the food of our souls, He says, *I am that*  
*living bread.*

And thus Christ having spoken in general of the benefits men were to receive by him, as the Saviour of the world; He proceeds, at the 51st verse, by a small variation of the metaphor, to point at the particular manner of his redeeming us, *viz.* his passion and death. He had spoken to the same purpose before (Chap. iii. 14.) *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* But here he does it, I say, by a small variation of the figure: For bread and flesh, though they differ much in their nature, yet when used figuratively, they signify the same thing, *i. e.* food or nourishment. The sacrifices in the levitical law, though made Lev. xii.  
of flesh, are nevertheless called the bread 6, 8.  
of God. And Christ, the true sacrifice, is John vi.  
likewise called by both names; *I am that* Ver. 48.  
*bread of life.* And the bread that I will 51.  
give, is my flesh, which I will give for the  
T 2 life

SERM. *life of the world.* When some of his hear-  
 XIII. ers understood this in a carnal or literal  
 ~~~~~ sense, saying, *How can this man give us his*  
flesh to eat? Christ tells them that he spake
 Ver. 63. in a figurative sense; *it is the spirit that*
quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the
words that I speak unto you, they are spirit,
and they are life. i.e. It is the spiritual mean-
 ing which quickeneth, or has the life-giv-
 ing power: it would profit you nothing,
 if it were possible for you and all christi-
 ans to eat and drink my flesh and blood in
 a carnal sense; but the words which I
 speak, have a spiritual meaning, and, be-
 ing so understood and obeyed, they are
 the means of eternal life. And as eating
 the flesh of the Son of man, and drink-
 ing his blood, are thus a certain means of
 eternal life; we perceive again, that *that*,
 and believing on the Son of man lifted up,
 are the same thing; and the words of the
 text indeed, considered with the verse fol-
 lowing, do so absolutely entitle all who
 perform the conditions there signified to
 eternal life, and exclude all others, that
 they can signify no less than the whole of
 christianity: By no means can they signify
 any one part of it, or any thing of such
 a nature as a sacrament is; not absolutely
 necessary,

necessary, not good in itself, but only as SERM.
it is commanded, or as it is a means use- XIII.
ful to some better end. 

The 55th verse is variously read in the original; and some copies, with the greatest appearance of truth, read (not ἀληθῶς, but ἀληθῆς ἐν βρωσικῇ) not *my flesh is meat indeed* (for it is not) but *my flesh is the true meat, and my blood is the true drink*. They are not, I say, meat and drink in deed or fact, but in a figurative sense; the true food of souls, in opposition to any other pretended means of salvation, which may be offered: as before, Christ called himself the true bread in opposition to the manna; and as our heavenly treasure is called the true riches, in opposition to the wealth of this world. Well then might he say, as the words of the text import, Except ye spiritually feed, or support your souls by faith in a crucified Saviour, and by obedience to his doctrine, ye have no life in you. The same as St. Peter afterwards taught in plain terms; *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*—Now therefore, eating the bread of life, and eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of
T 3 man,

Acts iv.
12.

SERM. man, as they are mentioned in this chap^r.
 XIII. ter, have no further relation to the sacra-
 ~~~~~ment of the Lord's supper, than by the  
 analogy there is between them, or as they  
 all teach the same thing. Christ here  
 preaches a doctrine, and enforces it by a  
 familiar metaphor of meat and drink.  
 And, because it is a doctrine of the utmost  
 importance, to imprint it further on our  
 minds, he afterwards instituted a sacra-  
 ment by the same figure: one is a meta-  
 phor spoken in words, the other is the  
 same, acted by a ceremonial rite. And  
 thus, having explained the words of the  
 text, I proceed,

Secondly, to shew what use we may and  
 ought to make of them.

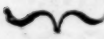
First, they teach us in general that our  
 duty as christians, is a continued daily  
 practice, as necessary for the support of  
 our spiritual life, as our daily meat and  
 drink is for the support of our temporal.  
 But the metaphors of eating and drinking  
 suggest to our minds several particulars  
 worthy to be considered by all who call  
 themselves christians, and propose to them-  
 selves salvation by that means. And,

First, They imply hunger and thirst. *i.e.*  
 an earnest desire of evangelical righteouf-  
 ness,

ness, or that righteousness which is by SERM.  
 faith in Christ, and obedience to his com- XIII.  
 mands; for although this be a thing ab-  
 solutely necessary, that we may have life  
 in us; yet, unless we hunger and thirst  
 after it, we shall be as negligent in the  
 pursuit of it, as we should in feeding our-  
 selves, if we had no appetite to prompt  
 and constrain us. In such a condition,  
 men would starve their bodies, with as lit-  
 tle concern, as we see now they starve their  
 souls. The Psalmist, by a very strong  
 figure, elegantly expresses his earnest desire  
 in this respect. *As the hart panteth after* Psal.  
*the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee,* xlii. 1.  
*O God; my soul is athirst for God.* And to  
 all who are thus affected, the promise of  
 Christ belongs; *Blessed are they that hunger* Mat. v. 6.  
*and thirst after righteousness; for they shall*  
*be filled.* And his particular call in the  
 Revelations; *Let him that is athirst, come.* Rev. xxii.  
*Him that is athirst; for no one else will,* 17.  
 although whosoever will, is there per-  
 mitted to take the waters of life freely.

Secondly, They import diligence and  
 industry in the search after this spiritual  
 food. Hunger and thirst, or an earnest  
 desire, will naturally prompt men to it; as  
 we see by the practice of all mankind,

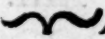
SERM. who labour hard, and undertake the greatest difficulties, rather than suffer want.

XIII.  And as negligence is the ready way to starving, so much more certainly will it prove the destruction of the soul. This is what Solomon means, when he tells us,

Prov. xix. *that slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and*  
 15. *an idle soul shall suffer hunger.* Slothfulness

in the duties of our christian calling, by degrees bringeth on a deep sleep, or a total inadvertency and inconsideration; in which the soul is almost sure, not only to suffer hunger, but to perish by it. And this vice is not only fatal to a man's self, but a great stop to the truth of religion in general, and one main cause of the hot disputes we have about it. For Solomon

Prov. xxvi. 16. *says again; The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.* And accordingly, we find none so obstinate in disputing about religion, as those idle people who take least pains and study about it. The first impressions they take on their minds, remain there, merely because they are the first; and, being neglected, or never thoroughly examined, by degrees they grow into complexion, not to be altered by any reasons, which seven, or seven hundred wise men can render. We are therefore

therefore directed to search diligently and SERM.  
deep for spiritual wisdom, as men seek for **XIII.**  
silver in the mines; and, if we neglect to ,  
do it, we shall be apt to content ourselves  
with what we find on the surface, whe-  
ther it be true metal or no; we shall take  
up with the first appearance of things,  
and in compliance with our own carnality,  
lay the main stress of our religion upon  
those things which are the least, or no  
parts of it. Hence it is, that many sup-  
port themselves with feeding on Christ,  
by a mere empty faith, without any, or at  
best, but a partial obedience; others, by  
trusting to his mercy, without a due care  
to render themselves the objects of it;  
others feed their souls, or rather their fan-  
cies, with hopes that they are predestinat-  
ed to eternal life, by some decree of God,  
which they know nothing of: and some,  
instead of eating the bread of righteouf-  
ness all their lifetime, imagine they can swal-  
low it all at once, when they come to  
die. Many other deceits there are, which  
negligent people take up with, from a  
careless and superficial attention to the  
word of God, and the reason of things.  
But seeing nothing that is excellent can be  
attained to without some proportionable  
pains



SERM. pains and industry, certainly spiritual wisdom, the most excellent of all, may very  
 XIII. justly deserve, as well as require, our pains.

~~~~~  
 God has made the well deep, that all men may labour therein ; but if all cannot go to the bottom, yet every honest industrious person, who is truly athirst for the waters of life, may have wherewith to draw as much as is required of him, and what is sufficient for the health and
 Heb. vi. salvation of his soul. *Be not therefore slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.*
 12.

Thirdly, The metaphors of eating and drinking, when they are regular, imply in them a relish, satisfaction and delight. For all those things which are taken against the stomach, are seldom profitable either for the health, strength, or increase of the body. And if we apply these to spiritual things, we shall find, that the want of them is one great cause of the little growth there is of christianity among us. Every healthful man has a natural appetite to create pleasure and delight in eating and drinking ; but it is not so in respect to the soul. For, although truth and righteousness are natural to it, and inseparable from it's happiness ; yet, through
 the

the infirm and corruptible state it is in SERM.
at present, it does not relish its spiritual XIII.
food, till it is instructed thereto by appli-
cation and practice. *The corruptible body* Wisd. ix.
presseth down the soul, and the earthly taber- 15.
nacle weigheth down the mind. So that the
soul, being encumbered with earthly ob-
jects as well as its own infirmities, is apt
to long for, and delight itself with, things
rather prejudicial than profitable for its
health. And hence, that little goodness
which men sometimes are moved to by
hopes or fears, for want of that pleasure
which should attend it, often becomes,
like the goodness of Ephraim, as a morn-
ing or the early dew. Or, if it continues
any time to be practised against the grain,
which will not be long, it is seldom uni-
form or entire; it does not strengthen or
give that vigour to the soul, which is pro-
per for the service of God. But, as a
remedy for this, let us consider, the conti-
nual feast of a good conscience; the de-
lightful prospect of a happiness eternal in
Heaven, and the agreeableness of the prac-
tice of virtue to human nature, especially
in some instances of doing good; and
these things, if habitually attended to, and
persisted in with patience, cannot fail to
create

SERM. create a pleasure and delight, which will,
 XIII. in a great measure, take off the tediousness
 ~~~~~ of duty, and make christianity, for the  
 most part, to be chosen as well for its present enjoyments, as for future expectations. And therefore, to excite and encourage us to a near application and practice, spiritual wisdom is represented to us, by things most agreeable and sweet. *My son,*  
 Prov. xxiv. 13, *eat thou honey because it is good; and the honey-comb which is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.* On the same motive, David exhorts the people, saying, *O taste and see that the Lord is good.* Where tasting signifies the relish which the soul has in the ways of God. For there is no tasting of God at present, but by the practice of righteousness, and imitating him in those amiable qualities, which are imitable by us, *i. e.* in being holy, as he is holy; just, as he is just; merciful, as he is merciful; and perfect as he is perfect. And the pleasure of being so, David here refers to our experience, as the best, or only means of making us truly sensible of it. And he was a person very proper to give this exhortation,

Prov.  
xxiv. 13,  
14.

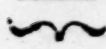
Psal.  
xxxiv. 8.

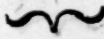
tion, as having proved it to be true, by his SERM.  
own practice; by which, he had made the XIII.  
law of God (as he says) *the very Joy of his* ~~~~~  
*heart.* Our Saviour, a great pattern of  
righteousness, took such pleasure in obe-  
dience, that he tells us, it was his meat  
to do the will of him that sent him, and  
to finish his work. And in our conformi-  
ty to this our pattern, consists our christi-  
an perfection. When we are once become  
so like him, as to do the work of God  
with pleasure, then do we most truly feed  
and nourish our souls with his body and  
blood; and then only are we in a fit pos-  
ture to enjoy, as well as in a right way to  
obtain everlasting life. For, 'till the heart  
is thus regulated, and fixed upon God, it  
is not the whole universe besides, can give  
a man his heart's desire.

Secondly: Notwithstanding it is plain,  
that the words of the text do not principal-  
ly intend the sacramental eating and drink-  
ing the body and blood of Christ, as an  
injunction of it; yet, seeing there is an  
analogy between them, and they both  
teach the same doctrine, and put us in  
mind of the same duty, they may be of  
use, and afford some instruction in respect  
to that institution. And,

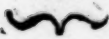


SERM. First; As they shew us what is absolutely necessary to salvation, they warn us

XIII.  not to lay that stress upon the outward ceremony, which is due only to the thing signified by it; not to expect that reward from any single act, which is promised only to the whole of christianity. For the Lord's-supper being a thing, in itself, not morally good or evil, can be of no benefit to a man, to implant holiness in him, or procure the favour of God, any further than as it is a single act of obedience, and as much the least of christianity, as the means are less necessary, and of less value, than the end. It is a memorial instituted by Christ himself, and therefore to be used in obedience to his order; and it is very proper to put us in mind of the relation we bear to him, and he to us; that he is our Master and only Saviour, and we his servants and disciples, who are to expect salvation on no other conditions but what he offers. And if any one will please to add, that all the benefits of Christ's death, are imparted to the worthy receiver of this sacrament, I do not deny, but what he says is true: but then the reason is, because every worthy receiver must be one who conforms to the doctrine

doctrine of the text, and feeds upon SERM.  
Christ, by faith and obedience; or is one XIII.  
who, in the general tenor of his life, is a   
good christian. The strengthening and  
refreshing of our souls, does not proceed  
from eating and drinking the sacramental  
bread and wine, but from doing what that  
signifies; viz. the practice of christianity  
as our daily meat and drink. It is eating  
and drinking in that sense, to which Christ  
has absolutely promised eternal life, but  
no where, as I know of, to receiving the  
sacrament. And were it so, that the pro-  
mise of the holy spirit was as plainly an-  
nexed to this sacrament, as we know it is  
to the duty of prayer, by St. Luke, *how* Luke xi.  
*much more shall your heavenly Father give the* 13.  
*holy Spirit to them that ask him?* yet I do  
not see that this would alter the case at  
all. For although prayer has this promise  
of the Holy Ghost, and is itself part of  
the moral law, a relative duty owing from  
creatures to their Creator; yet it is not the  
duty performed, even with the utmost at-  
tention and fervency, which will bring that  
blessing down. For God heareth not sin-  
ners, such as retain their purposes of sin-  
ning; but a man must lift up holy hands  
without wrath, *i. e.* live in holiness and  
piety,

SERM. piety, justice and charity, or else not expect to receive any blessing from God.

XIII.  The same would be true of the sacrament, if it had all the promises of the gospel expressly annexed to it; because the nature of the thing will not admit of it, that spiritual blessings should be imparted to any but such as live in faith and obedience. And therefore, when any such blessing is promised to any particular act, or to any single habit of virtue, the person is supposed to be, in all other respects, in a condition to receive it. And it is well worth our notice here, that although the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were given at once, by the single act of laying on of hands, yet the gifts of moral virtues are not, nor ever were so; but they are always attained to by degrees, by the blessing of God upon our own industry and practice. And therefore,

Secondly, This shews us what preparation is necessary for receiving this sacrament, *viz.* the same as is necessary for all other religious duties. *i. e.* a holy life, or, at least, a sincere purpose and resolution of living so for the future. For whosoever comes into the presence of God, with a pretence to serve him, and at the same time

time takes part with his enemies, by SERM.  
living in impenitency, as much deserves, XIII.  
and will as certainly have, greater damna-  
tion, as he that comes to the sacrament in  
the same manner. All sorts of sacrifices  
of the wicked, *are an abomination to the* Prov. xxi.  
*Lord.* God himself appointed the Jewish 27.  
sacrifices, and therefore they laid great  
stress upon them, as the main of their re-  
ligion; as many christians do now upon  
the sacrament: but when those sacrifices  
were offered by wicked men, he says, *your* Isa. i. 14.  
*new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul*  
*hateth.* And even their laying such stress  
upon them, was a great aggravation of  
their sin; which occasioned their being  
told, by the prophet Jeremiah, that his  
commandment concerning them, was no-  
thing to be regarded in comparison of the  
moral law. *I spake not unto your fathers,* Jer. vii.  
*nor commanded them concerning burnt-offer-* 22, 23.  
*ings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded*  
*I them, saying, obey my voice.*

And, as a holy life is absolutely necessa-  
ry for the sacrament, so nothing else can  
be so, to a person who considers what he  
is going about, and attends it with that  
reverence and decency which the ceremony  
requires. Every pious man, who has lei-

U

fure,



SERM. sure, and is so disposed, may, by increase

XIII. of his devotion, make what preparation he

pleases, provided he does not lay too great stress upon it, and make the want of it an excuse for the neglect of his bounden duty. If I cannot perform all my own purposes in religion, I must not therefore neglect the command of Christ. And whosoever, when an opportunity offers, excuses himself as being unworthy, on account of worldly business or diversion, or any such thing; may, for the same reason, as well excuse himself from all other duties, and from the pretences of christianity itself. For, if he lives like a good christian, and, in the general tenor of his life, *spiritually eats the flesh of the Son of man, and drinks his blood*, he may come to the outward ceremony and profession of it, with humility, and thankfulness to that Saviour, who, by his death, obtained so great salvation for him: but, if not, all he will gain by being among christians, will be, to be more apparently found, *not having on a wedding garment, and so to be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The

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## The practical knowledge of God.

JEREMIAH ix. 24.

*But let him that glorieth, glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

**A**LTHOUGH these words are set SERM.  
in opposition to that which is con- XIV.  
tained in the foregoing verse; *Let*  
*not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither*  
*the mighty man, in his might, nor the rich*  
*man in his riches; Yet, we are not there-*  
*fore to suppose that there is nothing excel-*  
*lent, or valuable in wisdom, or strength,*  
*or riches; but only that, of themselves,*  
*they are of no avail to the safety or hap-*  
*piness of those who possess them. They*  
*are the gifts of nature or fortune, and are*  
*as instruments, good or bad, according to*  
*the application or use of them. But they*  
*are by no means fit matter for a man's*  
U 2 trust,

SERM. trust, much less of his glory or boast,

XIV. since the wisdom or riches of Solomon

may prove a snare to him, and the strength of Samson serve only to destroy himself. In short: since it is not our great abilities to act, but a right use of such as we have, which must recommend us to the favour and protection of God, it will much better become us to consider, and enquire diligently how we shall thus rightly apply them, than to make them the fuel of our pride and vanity, and consequently the cause of our undoing.

Now this enquiry is, in other words, what true religion is, or wherein it consists; a matter of great importance, and would be of no difficulty, had not human authority, together with the vices and hypocrisy of men, brought forth so many false pretences to it, in the christian world. These indeed are numberless, and some of them consist in things which true religion has nothing to do with; some, in superstitions, and things used instead of it, and many, in such as are contrary to it, which lead or drive men into practices hateful to God, and hurtful to one another; and make them most wicked upon religious principles.

Under

Under this difficulty, we are directed, SERM.  
in the words of the text, to the under- XIV.  
standing and knowledge of God; which  
is so necessary, and sure a way to the  
truth of religion, that it is here put for  
it, in the same manner, as our Saviour  
has since called it eternal life. And John xvii.  
then only may we conclude ourselves in 3.  
the right, when we acquiesce, or rest in  
that religion, or fear of God, which is  
taught, not by the precept of men, but  
by the knowledge and understanding of  
himself. In this, we have truly whereof  
we may glory; not by vain boasting or  
self-exaltation (which is not proper for  
sinners) but by an humble trust and repose  
of mind, arising from a consciousness, that  
we know God, and act according to that  
knowledge, and are therefore under his  
favour and protection.

I shall, first, endeavour to explain this  
knowledge of God, so very beneficial,  
and so justly recommended to us: by ob-  
serving, both what it does not consist in,  
and what it does;

And, secondly, I shall shew of how  
great concern it is, from the dangerous  
and fatal consequences of mistaking or  
neglecting it; or mixing it with other  
things,



SERM. things, or notions, which have a tendency  
XIV. quite contrary thereunto.

And first; This understanding and knowledge of God does not consist in knowing that he is almighty or allwise; or in things concerning his natural attributes; for, although these are the objects of our wonder and astonishment, and of our fears; yet they are not of our love and imitation; and therefore not proper directions for the conduct of our lives, or motives to serve and worship him in a right way, but very often, to do what is contrary to it.

For, as his power and dominion are well known from his creation and government of the universe, men are too apt to aim at a likeness to him in these, which has been the source of much tyranny and oppression; and all the mischiefs, which lawless ambition has brought upon the world. Many, who have placed their glory in being Gods upon earth, have for that purpose, cast off their humanity as far as they could, and wanted nothing but angelical power and strength, to make them very devils indeed. These are as hateful to God, as they are dreadful and destructive to men; and so are all those of  
lower

lower degree, who are of the same disposition, and love domineering ; who, instead of doing good, communicate misery and unhappiness to their fellow-creatures, and are therefore odious both to God and man. Nor,

Secondly, does this knowledge consist in prying into his metaphysical essence, which is incomprehensible, and altogether impossible to be known. And yet this has been made the subject of explanation and dispute by the same men, who cannot but acknowledge the incomprehensibility of it. And this also has brought no less misery upon the christian world, than the fore-mentioned imitation of his power and dominion. For mistaken men, falling out about things in which they could not possibly agree, condemned and persecuted one another ; and, instead of endeavouring to keep *the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace*, they established a unity of profession, by the bond of that authority, which they usurped to themselves, and exercised with unrelenting cruelty, wherever they had liberty so to do. <sup>Eph. iv. 3.</sup>

It is no very easy task, to tell how many different opinions have been broached, concerning the personality of God ; of

SERM. which the scripture says nothing at all,

XIV. Some assert that the three persons of the Trinity, are three minds; and others, that they resemble the soul of man, and its two faculties, the understanding and the will. Some suppose that the Son and Holy Ghost have their being, by the communication of the individual essence of the Father: and others say, only the specific essence. And these and many more, as absurd and unintelligible, have their opposites as stiffly maintained.

But, if a right understanding, or insight into the truth of such difficult points, be necessary to salvation, who then can be saved? If some very acute philosophers may escape, all others of shorter understandings, without doubt, must perish everlastingly. But, thanks be to God, it is not so. He does not here recommend to us, the understanding of his natural properties, much less of his personality, but his moral attributes; by the knowledge of which, we are best instructed to do such things only as are pleasing in his sight. But, while men thus boldly intruded into the secrets of God, as if they meant to dispel those clouds and darkness which are round about him, they have neglected that

righteous-

Pf. xcvi.

2.

righteousness and judgment, that mercy SERM.  
and holiness, which are the habitation of XIV.  
his throne. 

I am not here determining where the truth lies ; but would admonish those who tenaciously adhere to it, and insist upon that and other disputable points, to the breach of charity and the very bond of christian unity, to consider, that, in regard to the little good, and great mischiefs, which it has occasioned, it were better laid aside, than retained as an article of Faith, necessary to salvation. And this has been the opinion of many of our best divines, and such too, whose orthodoxy has not been suspected.

For, indeed, how can it consist with the goodness of God, that men's salvation should depend upon things difficult to be understood ? or, that they should suffer for not believing what they cannot ? especially, if we consider, that mere belief is not morally good or evil, because it does not depend upon our choice, but the final determination of our judgment.

And furthermore, it has been the judgment of all reformed christians, that the scriptures are a clear as well as perfect rule, in all things necessary to salvation.

And



SERM. And therefore, if this doctrine is not  
 XIV. clearly revealed, as, by the many disputes  
 ~~~~~ about it, we may presume it is not, then  
 neither can it be thus necessary to be be-
 lieved. We are informed, by men of
 learning and enquiry, that it was not visi-
 ble in the three first ages of christianity.
 It was brought forth in darker times, when
 men fell out, and condemned one another,
 and had obtained a power to put their
 sentences in execution. But, were such
 difficult and disputable doctrines highly
 beneficial, if not absolutely necessary, to
 serve the purposes of christianity, they must
 have been so, as well before as afterwards ;
 from whence it is to be suspected, that that
 was not so much the design of them, as
 to make them the tokens or tests of sub-
 mission to human authority, or the com-
 mandments of men ; as all the doctrines
 peculiar to the church of Rome, are mani-
 festly so to this day.

In short, to shew of how little impor-
 tance some opinions may be, whether
 right or wrong, let us suppose a man not
 able to discern, by scripture or otherwise,
 that Jesus Christ is equal to God the Fa-
 ther, as he is said to be, in one of our
 creeds. If this man acknowledges that He
 is

is the Son of God, as the apostles required SERM.
of their converts ; and that he is invested XIV.
with all authority and power, both in
heaven and earth ; he will then have mo-
tives enough to believe and obey all the
precepts of the gospel ; and, in so doing,
he will answer all the ends of every article
of faith, and his mistake will be without
fin. Whereas, let any one believe and
assert, with all confidence, the highest that
has been spoken of the divinity of Christ,
so as to boast of his orthodoxy ; yet, if he
continues in sin, St. John assures him that
he has not seen him, neither known him ;
but is of that wicked one, whose works
he was manifested to destroy.

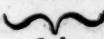
Having thus shewn negatively, in what
this knowledge recommended to us by
God himself does not consist, I proceed
to consider those things in which it does ;
and which we have here specified in the
words before us, *viz. That he understands
and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which
exercise loving kindness, judgment and right-
eousness in the earth : for in these things I
delight, saith the Lord.*

This is the only knowledge of him,
which is both instructive and profitable for
us : It consists in understanding his moral
attri-

SERM. attributes, in order to our imitation of
 XIV. them ; which, by forming us after his own
 image, he has prepared us for.

And first ; It is matter of great comfort to us, that his loving kindness leads the van ; and as the Psalmist declares, that
 Pf. lxxxix. *mercy and truth shall go before his face.* By
 14. which we may understand, that, in all his works, and dispensations towards us, his first regard is to the good, and happiness of his creatures. And this his first appearance in so amiable a form, is a great encouragement to repentance for the greatest of sinners ; and as we are assured that He is merciful, we have the like assurance that it will not be in vain to live in his fear. *There is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared.*
 Pf. cxxx. 4.

Secondly ; It is of equal concern to us, to know that he exercises judgment and righteousness in the earth ; that he governs the world by his providence, which is not confined (as some philosophers imagined) to things above, but condescends (as we are better taught) to the smallest of our affairs, even to the hairs of our head. And we may be sure also, that this Judge of all the earth will do what is right, in rendering to every one, without respect of per-

persons, according to his deeds. *For the* SERM.
work of a man shall be render unto him, and XIV.
cause every man to find according to his ways. 

And lest any one should so far depend Job xxxiv. 11.

upon his mercy, as to neglect or contemn
his justice and holiness, 'tis to be observed,
that when He proclaimed himself to Moses,
The God merciful and gracious,—forgiving
iniquity and transgression and sin; 'tis added,
that He will by no means clear the guilty.

Exod.
xxxiv.
6, 7.

Meaning, not every guilty sinner, but such
only who, by their obstinately persisting
in their enmity to Him, and being mis-
chievous to their fellow-creatures, have,
contrary to his design, placed themselves
among those who are not fit objects of
that mercy which is over all his works.

But to proceed to my second proposition;
God having so plainly declared what that
knowledge is, which alone can be of use
to us, and is our only glory, *viz.* His
loving-kindness, judgment and righteouf-
ness, and told us that he delights in these
things; it must be very dangerous, either
to mistake or neglect it; or to mix it with
other things or notions, which have a ten-
dency contrary to it. For, if we know
not, or regard not, what the things are,
in which He delights, we shall be apt to
serve

SERM. serve him by what he does not delight in,
XIV. or by what he hates : either according to

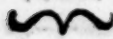
our own imaginations and fears, or by the commandments and doctrines of weak or crafty men. And 'tis certain that false and unworthy notions of God, in regard to his moral attributes, have been the occasion of all the superstitions and false doctrines which have been taught, and exercised among men : and, what is worse, have prepared and prompted them to that devilish and dreadful method of persecution, by which they have been propagated and maintained in the world. Had the rulers of this darkness known and considered, that the God whom they pretend to serve, delighted in the exercise of loving-kindness, and to behold the same in his creatures ; and that he would have mercy rather than sacrifice : or the instructions of our Lord and master ; *That ye love one another, as I have loved you ; and, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy ;* I say, had they duly reflected on these things, they could never have thus fulfilled his prophecy, in thinking to do God service by killing his disciples, and for no other reason, but a conscientious regard to his truth. Or, if against their own knowledge,

Matt.
xiii. 34.
Matt. v.
7.

ledge, they were instigated by the ambi-^{SERM.}
tion of being Lords over God's heritage ^{XIV.}
(which, without doubt, is of great weight
with many of them) yet the collective
body of the people would never have
suffered it, but stood in their own defence,
if they had not been held in ignorance,
and cheated into a persuasion, that it is
God's will, and their duty to submit to,
and help on, such hellish proceedings, so
contrary to his natural benevolence, and
that of mankind.

Opinions about the natural properties of
God, and ceremonies, unprofitable some-
times, and never absolutely necessary, have
afforded pretences for persecution. And,
of all people, the Jews had the greatest
appearance of right, in maintaining their
religion by that means, because it consisted
in many ceremonies instituted by God
himself; and therefore they were very
zealous for these ceremonies, supposing
them to be the things in which God did
delight. And all who know him no better,
but imagine that he is best pleased with
such or such forms of worship, or opinions
called orthodox, and with their zeal in
maintaining them, by any means in their
power, will likewise think it their duty to
hate

SERM. hate whom he hates, and to root out every

XIV.  plant which their heavenly Father hath not planted, *i. e.* every sect or party but their own. And hence it is, that we read

of so many sincere christians worried to death for the sake of doctrines obscure and doubtful, and therefore needless; and sometimes by men who were refugees from persecution themselves. And that these things proceed from the want of that knowledge which I am speaking of, our Saviour plainly testifies; saying, *these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me.*—But the Jews were inexcusable, because their ignorance was wilful and affected.

John
xvi. 3.

For although their rituals were instituted by God himself, yet the observation of the moral law was always preferred before them, and with such a degree of comparison, that they are said to be nothing at all. They were often told so, and that their performances of them were an abomination and hateful to God, as long as they themselves were unrighteous and uncharitable, and their hands were full of blood.

And if christians can do the same things, whose religion is summed up in
the

the love of God and man; who are plainly SERM.
told, that all they do without charity, is XIV.
nothing worth; that *God is love, and he* 1 John iv. 16.
that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and
God in him; And that *he that loveth not his* 1 John iii. 14.
brother, abideth in death; I say, if such can
persecute one another, they know neither
God nor Christ, nor what they profess;
or, if they do, must be still more inexcusable
for casting such knowledge behind
their backs.

Secondly, when men are so weak as to
ascribe arbitrary will and pleasure to God,
in the same sense as they do to earthly tyrants,
or with no other difference, but that one is finite,
and the other infinite; they may likewise suppose
him to have evil dispositions, and that his glory
may be advanced by injustice, cruelty, or insatiable
revenge. And this is manifestly true in fact; christians
have represented God, as creating a multitude of
people for no other reason, but to exercise his
absolute power and dominion over them, in their
punishment and misery: That for a colour of justice,
he made them, as it were, moral agents, but placed
them in such a situation, that they could not but
fall, according to his own unalterable decrees. And one of

SERM. these * Doctors, at the synod of Dort,
XIV. did not scruple to assert in that assembly,

W that, "as He predestinated men to death,
* Goma-
rus. See "so he predestinated him to sin, the only
Hales' let-
ters from
the synod. "way to death." And, lest this unreason-
able cruelty, which they ascribe to their

maker, should seem to have any bounds or
mixture of mercy, no punishment will
serve them, but what is infinite; the mis-
erable wretches, who, according to this
doctrine, could have no guilt, must not
be freed, as Christ says, *when they have*
Luke xii. *paid the very last mite,* but must be for
59. ever paying what they never owed.

But, beyond all this; as the gracious
invitations of God to repentance, and his
declarations that he has no pleasure in
the death of a sinner, stand in opposi-
tion to their doctrines, they evade all
these, by supposing that He has a secret
will contrary to that which he has re-
vealed; the plain consequence of which,
is, that they impute falsehood to the judge
of all the earth, and such falsehood as
every one, except the most profligate
wretches on earth, would be ashamed of.

Charity will not suffer us to suppose
that these men see what they do; or,
that their intention is to blacken the moral
character

character of God; but that they either SERM.
know it not, or will not consider how XIV.
contrary it is to what they affirm of Him. Their design is uniformity in opinion; which, howsoever impossible it is, has been the great pretence for establishing human authority over men's consciences, with which that authority has nothing to do.

Thirdly; When men have unworthy conceptions of God, and such as are contrary to his natural benevolence or loving kindness, they will consequently serve him with superstitious and needless performances, as well as torment themselves with superstitious and groundless fears. They will be apt to pursue the means of godliness, as if it was the end; and when they observe, in scripture, that we are exhorted to fasting and other austerities; to *be afflicted and mourn and weep*; and that *they who sow in tears, shall reap in joy*; they will understand these things according to the notions they have of God, and suppose that he is pleased with our present sufferings and unhappiness. But the truth is; as He does not willingly grieve or afflict us himself, so, neither is he willing that we should afflict ourselves, merely for

Jam. iv.
9.

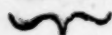
SERM. the sake of that affliction, but only as

XIV. it is subservient to repentance, or subdu-
ing those unruly passions and appetites,
which otherwise would hurry us on
to our own ruin; which He, in mercy
and kindness, is solicitous to prevent.
So that, if godly sorrow worketh repen-
tance to salvation, it is good, and not to
be repented of; but if it has not that
effect, it may very likely be the occasion
of what is contrary to it. For when
people suppose that God is pleased with
the sufferings they feel, and that they
have reconciled themselves to him, and
can obtain his favour by that means,
they will be more bold to transgress his
commandments another time. And hence
it is, that some are very strict in their
religious exercises, and yet idle and vain,
or loose and unguarded in their lives.
In short; it is the ignorance of the moral
character of God, which has helped the
devil to propagate his own worship; and
make the most inhuman and cruel exercises
pass for religion more or less, all over the
world. Which yet, he could never have
done, had it not been for the temporal ad-
vantage of some cunning and crafty men.

But,

But, before I conclude, it is necessary SERM.
to observe, that a right knowledge of XIV.
God, will be of no avail unless it is put in
practice. It is our duty not only to know
him, but to *be followers of him as dear chil-* Eph. v.
dren. He who knows him to be a merciful 1.
and benevolent Being, need not be at a
loss to know what true religion is, or what
will recommend him to the divine favour.
Let him exercise loving kindness, in doing
good, according to his abilities, and com-
municating happiness to his fellow-crea-
tures, as much as he can. For he that in
these things serveth Christ is acceptable to
God, and approved of men: such amiable
qualities will gain him an universal love
and esteem. Solomon says the same; *Let* Prov. iii.
not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them 3, 4.
about thy neck, write them upon the table of
thine heart. So shalt thou find favour,
and good understanding in the sight of God
and man. Acts of charity are such as Matt. xxv
Christ has promised in a particular man-
ner to reward. And St. James has
summed up the whole of religion, in
charity and holiness; *Pure religion and* Jam. i. 27
undefiled before God and the Father is this;
to visit the fatherless and widows in their
affliction,

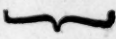
SERM. *affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from*
 XIV. *the world.*



In like manner, it will but increase our guilt and punishment, to know that God exercises righteousness and judgment in the earth, if at the same time, we allow the practice of criminal and indirect means, to obtain the advantages of this present world. Oppression, extortion, bribery and fraud of all kinds, can never pass for wisdom and policy, with any one who seriously believes that all things are in the hands of God, and at his disposal; unless he thinks he can over-power or impose upon him, as he does upon mortals like himself. A true believer will be sensible that the fear of the Lord, is the best wisdom for man; and the best way to riches and honour, when he hears the prophet Isaiah declaring, that he

Isa. xxxiii.
 15. *shall dwell on high, who walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppression, and shaketh his hands from*

Pf. xv. 2. *holding of bribes. And the Psalmist; He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.* Speaking the truth in the heart, is inconsistent with all guile and deceit; all double meanings, and words dropt, which, though literally true, have a criminal intention to raise

raise the expectation of the hearers to an ^{SERM.} undue measure, whereby the real truth is ^{XIV.} suppressed, and the innocent and simple  deceived.

To conclude; these and all other fraudulent and criminal practices, made use of for profit or advantage, are contrary to the justice and all-seeing eye of God; and therefore noted in scripture as a denial of him; or that he exercises judgment and righteousness in the earth. They who do such things, are the same of whom St. Paul speaks; *They profess that they know* ^{Tit. i. 16.} *God, but in works they deny him.* And the dangerous state they are in, we may learn from the chapter of which my text is a part: where we may observe that a disregard to the knowledge of the nature of God, so plainly revealed to us in the holy scripture, is a sure foundation for the progress of sin; as the prophet intimates when he says, that *men proceed from evil* ^{Ver. 3.} *to evil,* (from one degree of wickedness to another) *and they know not me, saith the Lord.*

the explanation of the letters to the
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 revealed, and the temple and temple

to conclude, and the other part
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The practical confideration of God's Providence.

PROV. iii. 6.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

THE wise author of this text takes notice, in his book of Ecclesiastes, ^{SERM. XV.} *That the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.* ^{Eccl. ix. 11.} By time and chance, he means nothing else but the Providence of God, which interposes at all times, and in all affairs; and directs every event of things. For chance or fortune, or fate, are nothing in themselves, and therefore never did, nor can act, or produce any thing at all. They are indeed mere names, which we use, to express our own ignorance, when things are brought to pass we know not how; when they are produced

SERM. produced without any visible direction, or
 XV. contrary to it.

~~~~~ In like manner, what is said to be done by time; that it brings things to perfection, or to decay; or, as it is represented laying all things waste, and subduing all things; is only what is done *in* time by some agents either known or unknown to us, according to the will of God; and which, if he pleases, he can perform in one day, as well as in a thousand years. Time and chance therefore, with him, are nothing at all, because nothing can fall out beside his knowledge; he not only sees what effect every cause will have, but directs them according to his own wisdom and pleasure; He doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, both in heaven and earth. The proverb gives us an instance of this, in casting lots; in which we know all things relating both to putting in, and drawing out, are performed by man; but even the person who acts, is altogether ignorant after what manner it will turn out, and therefore calls it chance; whereas, in reality, it is not only a rational, but a most wise disposal of God, which he brings about by natural causes, as certain, and as well known to himself, as any thing else in nature

ture can be. *The lot is cast into the lap: SERM.  
but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. XV.*

Now the preacher does not say these things to discourage men from using their own diligence and industry, in their affairs; for, in his book of Proverbs, he is very full and copious in teaching the contrary; as if it had been his peculiar favourite doctrine: nor is there any vice which he reproofs more severely than negligence and sloth. *The hand of the diligent,* Prov. xvi. 33.  
he says, *shall bear rule; but the slothful shall* Prov. xii. 24.  
*be under tribute.*

Nor does he assert that swiftness is not the most likely means of winning the race; or, that in a battle, the victory does not usually fall on the strongest side; or that men of wisdom or understanding or skill, have no advantage above others, in gaining riches, or advancing their fortunes in the world; for 'tis plain by our own experience, that these are in their nature, means directly tending to their several proper ends there mentioned: and they are so by the appointment of the God of nature, and therefore to be esteemed as such, and made use of by man.

But his meaning is, that these things are not always so; these natural means have

SERM. have not always their most probable ends ;

XV. nor has God so certainly fixed the connection between apparent causes, and the event of things, but that he has left room for himself to interpose, and turn them as it seems best to his divine wisdom. And thus 'tis we must understand the wise man, when he tells us, in one place, that *the*  
 Prov. x. 4. *band of the diligent maketh rich*, and in another, in the same chapter, that *the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich* ; which only teaches us, that although diligence is the most direct and probable way to obtain riches ; yet, it will not do without the blessing of the Lord.

The design of this doctrine therefore is not, I say, to discourage men from using their own diligence and industry, or wisdom, or strength, or skill ; but that they should not rely with too much confidence upon them, nor trust, in such a manner, to natural means, or second causes of things, as if there was no supreme cause at all ; or, as if the Providence of God was not concerned in human affairs. For so to do, whatever men may profess, is downright atheism in practice, or living without God in the world.

In

In like manner, that prohibition in the SERM. words immediately before my text, viz. **XV.**

*Lean not to thine own understanding*; is not to be understood as absolute, but only as it stands in opposition to what goes before; *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart*. Not as if it was unfit that men should make use of their own understanding in any of their affairs, whether spiritual or temporal (for it is their duty so to do, and what distinguishes a wise man from a fool) but that they should not lean so much to it, as to neglect the Providence of God; and imagine that things cannot be brought to pass for their good, but by ways of their own invention, or such as seem to them the most probable, though perhaps they are sometimes very wicked, or contrary to the main designs of Providence, in promoting universal piety and virtue among men.

Now this doctrine of the Providence of God presiding over all affairs, is the foundation of that excellent counsel given us in the text, and is implied in it; in all thy ways, acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths. A duty so necessary to a christian life, that they must be only hypocrites, and vain pretenders to christianity,



SERM. ty, who can live in contempt, or a gross  
 XV. neglect of it. And that this may appear  
 to be true, I shall consider,

First, The signification of the phrase, to acknowledge God, or what it is, to acknowledge him in all our ways ; and,

Secondly ; The advantages arising from such a practice, signified in those words, *He shall direct thy paths* : in which also I shall take notice of some mischiefs proceeding from the contrary, or the neglect of it.

And first ; To acknowledge God is not only to acknowledge or assent to his Being, or that there is is a first cause or Creator of all things in the universe ; for that is a truth so plain to the reasoning faculty of mankind, that it is hardly possible for any one not to see it. There are some indeed, who endeavour and pretend to think otherwise, and that his eternal power and Godhead, is not to be clearly seen by the things that are made. But this proceeds not from their love of truth, or from want of understanding to discern it, but from the fear of this necessary consequence ; that, if they own there is a God, they must own themselves obliged to honour him as God, and to conform to his will.

And

And yet that fear is often strong enough SERM.  
to manifest that they lie to themselves; XV.  
and that, although they pretend to free-  
thinking, they are not so free in their  
thoughts, as to think so great an absurdity. There are others also who profess  
to know God, yet are so indolent and  
lazy, or so wholly immersed in the things  
of this life, that they never trouble themselves  
with the consequences of it. But  
that great truth, how important soever it  
is, lies unregarded, and is of little or no  
use, as it was obtained by little or no pains,  
in examining the grounds of it. One of  
these denies the Being of God, in spite of  
all the plain evidences of nature; and the  
other assents to that truth, without ever  
examining what those evidences are: both  
equally pernicious, and atheistical, in regard  
to practice. I do not mean, that  
every man is obliged to see all the philosophical  
proofs, and reasonings concerning  
this truth; for, as that is not in the  
power of most men, it cannot, for the  
same reason, be their duty: but every man  
is obliged to make use of the understanding  
he has, with sincerity, whatever the  
measure of it be; and to take care that  
the light which is in him, be not darkness  
by

SERM. by his own neglect. And if he does thus  
 XV. much, he will not want evidence to establish him in the truth, and make him know God; nor motives to honour him as God, or to acknowledge him in all his ways.

Secondly; To acknowledge God, must signify to acknowledge what he is, and the relation he bears to us; that he is infinite in all perfections; in power and wisdom, in justice and goodness; that, as he made and sustains all things, so he continues to govern the world, and by his Providence to interpose in all affairs: That He is a just, as well as merciful judge of all the earth, to whom every soul must be accountable for what he does in the body, whether it be good or evil. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.* And this, even in the most minute and inconsiderable of things. For Christ tells us, that *the hairs of our head are all numbered*; and that *we must give account of every idle word in the day of judgment.*

Prov. v.  
21.

Matt. x.  
30.

xii. 36.

Thirdly; He that acknowledges these things in earnest, and not in pretence only, must shew it by his works, and the influence it has upon his life and conversation.

sation. For when the scripture calls upon SERM.  
us to acknowledge, or to know God, or XV.  
any of his attributes, it means that that  
knowledge should be practical, and pro-  
duce in us such righteousness as is proper  
to it. For which reason, knowing God,  
and walking in his ways, often signify the  
same thing. Thus, the prophet Jeremiah  
says; *He judged the cause of the poor and* Jer. xxiii.  
*needy; then it was well with him: was not* 16.  
*this to know me? saith the Lord.* And on  
the other hand, when the people *proceeded*  
*from evil to evil; they know not me, saith the* Jer. ix. 3.  
*Lord:* And 'tis said, that it was *through* Ver. 6.  
*deceit*, and not ignorance, that *they refused*  
*to know God.*

But that such knowledge may not be  
in vain, but have its proper effect upon  
us, God has given us a faculty of reflect-  
ing on our own thoughts and actions,  
which is commonly called conscience: and,  
as this is what chiefly distinguishes us from  
brutes, it must be very shameful, as well  
as fatal to us, to neglect it. They who do  
not neglect it, but live according to their  
nature as men, will be restrained from  
what is wicked, or tending towards it, as  
long as they acknowledge God to be privy  
to it, as well as themselves. The truth of

Y

what



SERM. what St. John asserts, will then be manifested before their eyes; *If our heart condemn*

*us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

<sup>1</sup> John iii.  
20.

But, fourthly, That which is chiefly intended in the text, is, that we do this in all our ways; not only in the great and weighty affairs of life, but upon all occasions, and at all times, and in all places. The thoughts of him who is present every where, must not be confined to the church or closet, or to any particular times of solemnity, but be likewise every where, where he is, all the days of our life. Thus the Psalmist acknowledges him;

Pf. cxxxix. *Thou knowest my down-sitting and my up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.* This does not suppose or intend what, in our present condition, is impossible, viz. That God should every minute of our lives, be actually in our thoughts, but that he should be habitually so; and never, upon any account, even in our diversions, be wilfully excluded, as if he knew not, or was not concerned with, what we go about. For, as far as men do this, so far they do not acknowledge but deny him to be what he is.

The

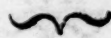
The sum then of this duty is, that we <sup>SERM.</sup> so acknowledge the providence of God, XV. as to have recourse to him in all our counsels and undertakings; to look upon him as the prime cause of all we suffer, and all we enjoy: and therefore to call upon him, on all occasions, and not depend entirely upon our own policy, wisdom, or cunning, or the assistance of other men; but to hope for the success of our affairs at his hand. And if to this we join that most necessary consideration; that He is good, and of infinite mercy and loving-kindness to all his creatures; and that He has a fatherly care over us, and will never leave us nor forsake us; but make all things work together for good to them that love him; we shall then be prepared for that precept of St. Paul, in which the life of true religion consists; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* For, by this means, men will naturally pursue the glory of God and their own happiness in the same view. And this is no other than what I proposed to speak of in the second place; viz. The advantages arising from the practice of this duty, contained in that promise; *He shall direct thy paths.* In which also I shall

Cor. x.  
31.

SERM. take notice of some mischiefs proceeding  
XV. from the neglect of it.

— And here we must consider that God's promises are not made good to us by miracle, or any visible supernatural means, but by the secret operations of his Providence; whereby He blesses and prospers us, when, of our own accord, we choose the right way, or the ways of righteousness; and pursue the most probable means of our happiness, whether spiritual or temporal. Then 'tis He will prevent, or go before us in all our doings, and direct our paths.

And first; It is very evident that an habitual acknowledging God, in the manner I have shewn, must be the most probable means to preserve a man from falling into sin. For he that has it continually in his heart, and can constantly acknowledge this truth with the Psalmist, *Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways, and understandest my thoughts long before*; will not give entertainment to such loose, vain, or idle thoughts, which the devil, or his own corrupt heart, or former habits of sin, may suggest to his mind. The first appearance of them, indeed, may not always be in his power  
to

to prevent; for, if the devil can tempt us SERM.  
 at all, it must be by stirring up evil thoughts XV.  
 in us. And we are sure that he does so;   
 for St. Peter tells Ananias, that *it was Sa-* Acts v. 3.  
*tan who filled his heart.* But, if Ananias  
 had considered the presence of God, with  
 the respect due to it, it might very likely  
 have stopped his proceeding to such wick-  
 edness, as to lie to the Holy Ghost. All  
 that a man can do to prevent the devil, is  
 to busy himself in religious, necessary, and  
 lawful employments: but scarce any one  
 being so diligent, as to exert his utmost  
 possible care and pains, the watchful de-  
 vil will have his opportunity, to intrude,  
 and try his skill, although his entertain-  
 ment will not be the same in every heart.  
 He who habitually considers God as the  
 searcher of all hearts, a most just judge,  
 and a lover and rewarder of holiness; will  
 abhor and reject all thoughts which tend  
 to unrighteousness, as naturally as a miser  
 will any thing which he knows will rob  
 him of his beloved treasure. And, by this  
 means, he engages the providence of God,  
 to preserve him from those snares and  
 temptations, which other men unavoid-  
 ably fall into. For, on the contrary, they  
 who have not God before their eyes, not



SERM. only give way to evil thoughts, and enter-

XV. tain them with pleasure, but call them in  
 by their own lust and vicious inclinations;  
 and the natural effect of them, is, to turn  
 away their minds from every thing that is  
 serious and profitable; and expose them to  
 any temptation that comes in their way.  
 And yet, after all, when sin, by this means,  
 is finished, they endeavour to satisfy, and  
 excuse themselves, by pretending that their  
 temptations were irresistible, and they  
 could not help what they have done:  
 whereas, in the mean time, they might  
 find in their hearts, if they would search  
 sincerely, that they were well pleased and  
 delighted to be so tempted, and drawn in.  
 All the uneasiness they feel, proceeds from  
 the known consequence of it; because they  
 cannot but know and fear that for these  
 things God will bring them into judg-  
 ment; not only for their sin, but likewise  
 for the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of their  
 excuses.

Secondly; As the acknowledging God  
 in all our ways, is the surest way to pre-  
 serve a man from falling into sin, so it  
 must consequently have a good influence  
 on his temporal affairs. For it will re-  
 strain him from undertaking any thing  
 that

that is unjust, or pursuing his ends by in-SERM.  
direct or criminal means. He will be XV.  
thoroughly sensible, and agree with Solo-  
mon, that *there is no wisdom, nor understand-* Prov. xxi.  
*ing, nor counsel against the Lord:* and that 30.  
the blessing of God is necessary, and not  
merely his own, or other men's devices, to  
make him prosper and grow rich. So that,  
whenever an opportunity of advantage is  
offered, though it be never so secret, he  
will not lay hold of it, unless he can ad-  
mit God into his counsels, and reasonably  
hope for his blessing upon it: he will use  
the wisdom of the serpent, but will always  
check it with the innocence of the dove.

Now 'tis very plain to every understand-  
ing, that such a one must escape all that  
fear and shame, as well as loss and da-  
mage, which most times attends or follows  
unrighteous practices; and, on the contra-  
ry, be prospered in his way, by all the ad-  
vantages, which arise from a constant and  
uninterrupted fair dealing; which we may  
presume to be of great value in the world,  
or else all men would not so industriously  
pretend to it, even when they are far from  
it. This, I say, is plain to every under-  
standing; but every real christian must  
see much more, though many who call

SERM. themselves so, seem to take little or no notice of it; they must see that the promise  
XV. of the text must infallibly be made good to him; that God will direct his paths; or preside over all his counsels, and direct them to good ends: if not always to the same which he himself aims at, yet always to those which are best for his advantage. And this we may all be sure of, from the fitness of the thing and the nature of God, as well as from innumerable promises in his holy word.

Hence we may see what sort of christians they are, who profess that the scriptures ought to be the rule of their lives, and yet, neglecting this duty, lean to their own understanding, and make their own cunning devices the chief ground of their temporal prosperity; and so carry on their worldly designs and interest, in a way, in which they dare not think upon God, much less hope for his blessing in it. These are not only such as endeavour to grow rich by downright oppression, fraud, or violence; but such also who do not scruple to use means which have a general bad influence, and are destructive, either to their own virtue and morality, or to that of other men: for this is directly contrary  
to

to the glory of God, and the designs of SERM.  
his Providence. XV.

But there are many such ways in the world, which men do not well consider, when they stir up strife and contention, and make parties and divisions among people; or encourage riot and excess, or any other vices, because they promote trade; or, by any other means, increase their worldly profit or interest. They may, and often do, without doubt, fancy themselves innocent in these cases, as long as they do not venture upon any actual sin themselves. But if they gladly reap the advantage of other men's sins, and love to have it so; and therefore will do nothing that is in their power to prevent it, they are then partakers with them: they are professed friends to christianity, but its secret enemies. For our reason cannot but join in that which Christ has said; *He that is not* Mat. xii.  
*with me, is against me; and he that gather-* 30.  
*eth not with me, scattereth abroad.*

And is there any wisdom, think ye, in this? or, is it a sign that such men have more strength of wit and understanding than better christians? So far from it, that 'tis a certain sign they have much less. For the very reason why fools have their eyes,

or



SERM. or understanding more at leisure, to em-

XV. employ about things present, and near at  
 ~~~~~ hand, is, because they cannot see at a distance. St. Peter tells us, that he who lacketh those things which are proper to preserve him from being barren or unfruitful, in the knowledge of God, is one of those

1 Pet. i. 9. fools who *is blind and cannot see far off*. And these are the very men, or the very fools, who take not God for their guide and director, but lean to their own understanding and cunning devices for prosperity in the world. And moreover, they are generally, if not always, as far from obtaining their present ends, as they are mistaken in the methods they use. For, if they speed so well, as to acquire some immediate gain (as too often they do) they might for all that very likely have had better success, by putting themselves in a way, in which they could expect the favour of God, to direct their paths, or prosper their undertakings; and not, on the contrary, have had his Providence to contend with. For, if they could trust the scriptures, and consult them, they would know what is there said, to be certainly true; *That a man shall not be established by wickedness; that God taketh the wise in their own*

Prov. xii.
3.

1 Cor. iii.
19.

own

own craftiness; and lets them fall by their SERM.
own counsels: The truth of which is also XV.
 manifest by frequent examples in this pre-
 sent world. And, were it not so, they are
 not to be envied, when they prosper and
 bring their devices to pass. For *riches, we* Ecc. v. 13.
are told, are kept for the owners thereof to
their hurt. And what benefit or advan-
 tage indeed can they reap from them,
 when their very table, and all their good
 things, become a snare to them, and a trap,
 and an occasion of falling?

Thirdly; I shall take notice of one ad-
 vantage more arising from this duty; and
 that is, the present happiness, comfort, and
 support in their way, which good men ex-
 perience in the practice of it. The cala-
 mities and afflictions of this life are very
 many, and very great; but 'tis generally
 thought, and not without reason, that
 mankind, considered together in the whole,
 are more unhappy from their fears, and
 apprehensions of evil to come, than they
 are from such as they really undergo. Now,
 there is no remedy against this, as long as
 a man looks on the things of this world,
 as merely under the government of chance
 or fortune; and has no further prospect
 for a support: the best state of human
 things

SERM. things having uncertainty enough in it to
XV. create anxiety and trouble of mind. It is

indeed natural for all men, to vary in some measure, according to their outward affairs; to be secure and confident in prosperity, when health and plenty are about them; and to sink low and despair, when these are wanting: and to be in perplexity and suspense, as long as their affairs are doubtful and uncertain. But, in all these states or conditions, the consideration of an almighty Guardian and Protector, and a loving Father presiding over all things, if it does not wholly take off the influence, which they will in some measure have, yet it will secure a man from the greatest evil or mischief of it: it will

Prov. xvi. 18. preserve him, in one case, from that pride and haughty spirit, which prepares a man for a fall and destruction; and in the other, from being desperately uneasy and unhappy: and most, certainly, from fretting himself so far as to do evil; or to say, as those reprobates mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, *There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices; and we will every one do the imagination of his own evil heart.*

Jer. xviii.
12.

An habitual marking, or taking notice SERM.
of particular providences, and acknow- XV.
ledging God in all circumstances and
accidents of life, whether great or small,
is the readiest way to incline a man,
to call upon him, and apply to him
in all cases ; or, to teach him pati-
ence and submission to his will, under
crosses ; and, when he succeeds well, to
thank and praise him with a joyful heart
as well as lips. And by this practice, he
turns both into a virtue ; and so, making
all his affairs religious, he brings down the
blessing of the Lord upon them. For, if
the eye of the Lord, be at all *over the righ-* Psal.
teous, it must be particularly over those xxxiv. 15.
who, in such a manner, put themselves
under his fatherly care.

And to conclude ; By thus acquainting
ourselves with God, we cannot choose but
love both him and his ways ; and then the
thoughts of him will not be grievous or
terrifying, but a most delightful entertain-
ment : they will create great comfort, if
not joy, in the midst of sorrow, sickness,
and pain, and even life, at the point of
death. Turn not away therefore from the
instructions and counsels of divine wis-
dom ;

SERM. dom; but *trust in the Lord with all thy*
XV. *heart: In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and*
~ *He shall direct thy paths.*

The character of those who are
scoffers at religion ; their folly and
danger.

2 PET. iii. 3, 4.

*Knowing this first, that there shall come in
the last days, scoffers, walking after their
own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise
of his coming? for since the fathers fell
asleep, all things continue as they were from
the beginning of the creation.*

THESE words are given as a very SERM.
necessary warning to all christians, XVI.
to beware, and not be offended at
those scoffers or mockers at religion, which
would appear in the last days, or times of
christianity. For so the last days signify
in scripture ; christianity or the gospel be-
ing the last dispensation of God to man-
kind, before the coming of Christ. *God,* Heb. i. 2.
*says St. Paul, bath in these last days, spoken
unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed
heir of all things.*

St.

SERM. St. Jude speaks of the same sort of people, as present in his time; and points
 XVI. them out by the character of separatists; sensual men, and such as have not the true spirit of christianity. But whatsoever particular men or times, the apostle may point at, it is too visible, that they abound in the christian world, at all times and in all places; so that we, who seem to live near the last of those last days, may very well say, as Christ upon another occasion, *This day, is this scripture fulfilled.*

The words, *knowing this first*, imply, that it is a prime concern, and very necessary that we should be forewarned of these scoffers; that we may be upon our guard, and not be shamed out of our religion by their scoffs, nor seduced by their ill examples, to drop our hopes and expectations of the promises of God. That we may the better understand how far this warning concerns us at present, I shall endeavour, in the following discourse,

First, To point out more particularly, the character of those who may be said to be scoffers or mockers (for the word is the same in the * Greek) who walk after their own lusts:

Secondly,

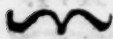
Secondly, To shew the means by which SERM. they support themselves, and go on in their XVI. way; viz. by saying, *where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation; and*

Thirdly, the great folly and danger of such men, set forth in the following part of the chapter, and other places of scripture.

It is very certain that men's walking after their own lusts, is the chief foundation of all the opposition that is made to the laws, promises and threatnings of God. And for that reason, all who do so, even christians themselves, though they may not arrive to that shameless impiety and boldness in sin, as, with open mouths, to scoff at religion like the most profane; yet, in some sense or other, may be said to be mockers, and partakers of their guilt. And as they proceed in the same way of walking after their own lusts, they may justly expect that their end and punishment will be the same in kind, if not in degree; and that is, to have their portion with hypocrites, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

SERM.

XVI.



The first, and most notorious of these walkers after their own lusts, are all atheistical persons, or sceptics, who, if they do not deny the very being of God, yet doubt much, or pretend to doubt, of his government of the world, that they may not regard it, in their life and practice. And, as they are generally men of some learning, and sciolists in philosophy, they can dispute against it, from the visible things of the world, and the steady course of nature: *all things*, they suppose, *continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*; if they allow any creation at all. Whereas St. Paul, and with him all christians, look upon the visible things of the world, as convincing arguments of the contrary. But these great pretenders to reason, dare not trust it for the support of their opinions, but can supply the want of it, in their own way, as long as witty and profane jests are arguments which pass more currently with the corrupt and ignorant bulk of mankind. I need not tell you that these, whether they profess christianity or no, are scoffers in the most strict and proper meaning of the word; or that there are some, not a few of them, in these last days.

Secondly;

Secondly; There are others, who are SERM. forward enough to profess christianity, XVI. and therefore behave with some decent regard to the external parts of religion; and yet, run with the former, into the same excess of riot and debauchery, more or less, according to their inclinations and opportunities. These are no more ashamed of vice and immorality, than the others are of their atheistical principles; and as both are concerned that there should be no judgment to come, they will turn away their attention from it, as much as those men who profess to believe nothing of the matter. And if they do not scoff at the promise of Christ's coming, they seldom fail to do it, at those sincere christians who, by a different life and conversation, prepare for it. This, according to the book of Wisdom, they will own and confess, when those deceits of the world, which now support them in their way, are fled, and have left them to the terrible aspect of the naked truth. *They, says that excellent author, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves; This was he, whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach.* And the reason why they are so apt to scoff at and

Wis. v. 3.

SERM. deride the life of a righteous man, is the
XVI. great opposition it makes to their own.

~ They are so much slaves to their lusts and pleasures, that they will not, by any means be conformed to it; and therefore, in their own defence, they must endeavour to discourage it in others, and persuade us, that their professed licentiousness is liberty, while the pious man is bound up, and streightened by needless and superstitious fears. These scoffers are very numerous, and differ from one another, according to their quality or condition in the world, and the company they keep. The better sort, being men of civil breeding, will consequently behave with more decency towards the religion they profess; which, unless they absolutely reject it, they must own to be worthy of esteem and veneration. They will do many things therefore in point of good manners, but nothing which will stop them in the pursuit of their lusts, or reform their lives; although that is the only design of religion, and the only good it can do. This is so plain and undeniable, that no serious objection can be made against it; and there is no evasion but by turning it to a jest, and deriding the true fear of God, as if it was fit
for

for nothing but to keep the vulgar in awe, SERM.
or for a bugbear to frighten superstitious XVI.
and weak people. But that respect which
is paid to religion by men so little, or not
at all under its influence, can appear no
otherwise than extremely ridiculous to eve-
ry sincere christian: and, in some things,
is as much a mock, as any thing which
an atheistical or profane person can frame
in words.

Nor will their inferiors be kept in awe
by their religion any more than themselves;
but, as they follow the bad example of
their betters, in walking after their own
lusts, they will likewise be inclined to de-
ride what they will not practise, as well as
those truly pious people, whose example
they cannot well abide; and this they ge-
nerally do like themselves, in a more rude,
vulgar and brutish manner.

It is not easy to conceive what great
mischief is done by this means; while they
who are called christians, propagate the
kingdom of darkness, by encouraging as
much as they can, those very works of the
devil, which Christ came to destroy, and
they themselves have formally renounced.
And these works of the devil, they do like
the devil himself, by drawing as many as
Z 3 they

SERM. they can into the same debauchery with
 XVI. themselves, and consequently into the same
 ~~~~~ condemnation. How many well-disposed  
 people are first led aside by such examples,  
 more than by their own choice and incli-  
 nations? and how many would repent,  
 and be reclaimed by the many convictions  
 they meet with, and the checks of their  
 own conscience, if they had but courage  
 to stand the scoffs and jeers of their com-  
 panions in wickedness?

But thirdly; There is another sort who  
 have great need to be advised of these scof-  
 fers, and to be taught how much they join  
 with them in the mischief they do, and  
 yet persuade themselves and others, that  
 they are in a quite contrary way. These  
 do not walk after their own lusts, in the  
 ways of open debauchery, or impiety pro-  
 fessed; but are content to please themselves;  
 in a more moderate use of worldly things,  
 upon which they have placed their heart  
 and affections, and will not, if they can  
 help it, be interrupted in the enjoyment of  
 them, by religion or any thing else. They  
 have therefore so much piety and good  
 works as will not disturb them in their  
 way, and yet satisfy their conscience, which  
 is blinded thereby; or perhaps laid asleep  
 by

by a careless and vain conversation, or SERM.  
multiplicity of business in the world. XVI.

These are such as the world approves of; and the character they have in it, of being good sort of people, is a very great hindrance to their own impartial repentance, as well as to that of other men. But, as it is not my present purpose, nor indeed possible, to describe these men in all their ways, and cheats, whereby they impose upon themselves, I shall only shew, that, how much soever they abhor the charge, they are scoffers and mockers at religion, in a proper sense.

They are indeed too well acquainted with the excellency of christianity, and the holiness it enjoins, to offer any disgrace directly to it, as it is in itself; but there being hardly any part of it, but what some hypocrites, or persons not approved of, will practise or pretend to; they take their advantage to bring it into contempt by that means. All those parts therefore which seem too strict, or otherwise not agreeable, these good sort of people will deride, and, in some shape or other, endeavour to scoff out of the world. For example; that discipline of self-denial by abstinence or other means, which Christ

SERM. and his apostles taught and practised as

XVI. generally necessary to salvation; and which  
 therefore our church prays that we may  
 use, is now rendered contemptible, by  
 the name of popery and superstition, and  
 derided almost out of use; as if the abuse  
 of it could alter the nature of the thing;  
 or, as if these people could not see, if they  
 dared open their eyes, that the most use-  
 ful and necessary things, may be most  
 grossly abused, but are not, for that reason,  
 to be rejected.

Again; There are no plainer precepts  
 in the gospel, than these of Christ and his  
 Mat. v. 16. apostles; *Let your light so shine before men,  
 that they may see your good works, and glorify  
 Phil. i. 27. your father which is in heaven. Let your  
 conversation,* says St. Paul, *be as it becometh  
 1 Pet. i. 15. the gospel of Christ.* And St. Peter, *Be ye  
 holy in all manner of conversation.*

And, without doubt, example is the best  
 lustre of virtue, and the greatest promoter  
 of the glory of God, in this world. Who  
 then but an atheist, or professed libertine,  
 will dare to contradict or deride this doc-  
 trine? None certainly, as it comes from  
 the author; 'tis downright profaneness,  
 and scandalous to a christian society. But  
 yet, as it is pretended to by dissenters, and  
 some

some others, of whom too many have no-  
thing of it but form and pretence; 'tis  
but to mix it with the rest of their cha-  
racter, and call it phanaticism, preciseness  
or hypocrisy, and it will appear most wor-  
thy of ridicule; and may be scoffed at by  
good sort of people, without any damage  
to their reputation. And thus the power  
of godliness itself, because it does not al-  
ways keep pace with its form, is banished  
out of conversation, and sanctity become  
a name of reproach; so that a sincere  
christian can hardly appear like himself,  
without being pointed at for an unfashio-  
nable devotion. But surely these people  
will not throw away, or undervalue their  
jewels, because there are some counterfeits;  
they can distinguish better by common  
sense, and might do the same in spiritual  
things, if it did not seem more easy to de-  
ride than it is to practise.

But then; what greater hypocrisy can  
there be, than to pretend to be christians,  
*i. e.* to be holy in all manner of conversation,  
and yet industriously avoid the appearance  
of it? It is certain, that the form of piety  
may be without the power, but as certain  
that the power or truth of it cannot be  
without the form. So that, while these  
men



SERM. men would seem to shun hypocrisy with  
 XVI. all their might, they themselves are the  
 { most refined hypocrites of all. The more  
 gross and common hypocrites endeavour  
 to impose upon other people, which they  
 seldom can do; but these endeavour to  
 cheat themselves, and have too great suc-  
 cess in the attempt.

To this we may add, the great neglect,  
 or rather contempt of those precepts of  
 charity, which are peculiar to christianity,  
 and distinguish the professors of it from  
 moral heathens. The words of Christ  
 Mat. v. are; *I say unto you, love your enemies, bless*  
 44. *them that curse you, do good to them that hate*  
*you, and pray for them that despitefully use*  
*you and persecute you.* But how many pre-  
 tend to the merits of Christ, and yet can  
 reject his words with a scorn of such a  
 meek and lowly behaviour; as if they  
 would despise the kingdom of God rather  
 Luk. xviii. than *receive it as a little child.* Instead of  
 17. doing as they would that men should do  
 unto them, they think it better to deal in  
 that spiteful manner, they imagine,  
 though most times falsely, they have been  
 dealt with; and shew by will, word, or  
 deed, what a relish they have for the sweet-  
 ness of revenge. But to such christians  
 we

we may say; *Ye know not what manner of* SERM.  
*spirit ye are of*; these are not the spots of XVI.  
God's children, nor the fruits of his spirit. ~~~~~

And accordingly, St. Jude speaks of such, as having not the spirit; they seem indeed not to pretend to it; for, should we talk to them in scripture language, of walking in the spirit, and being led by the spirit, it may be laughed at as enthusiasm, or the ridiculous cant of the most foolish sect of people in the world. But notwithstanding this, there is such a thing as having the spirit in a gospel sense, or the apostles would not speak of it as they do. And our church, in the sacrament of baptism, prays for the baptized person, that all things belonging to the spirit, may live and grow in him: of which the love of enemies is not the least. But by this means, the particular doctrine of the church of England, as well as other parts of the gospel, being first neglected, is derided by some who pretend to be its greatest friends: so natural it is, that they *who walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and stand in the way of sinners*, should necessarily, though often insensibly, be led *into the seat of the scornful*.

But

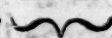
SERM. But I proceed, in the second place, to

XVI.  speak of the means by which these walkers after their own lusts support themselves and go on in their way; viz. by saying, *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation.* That atheists and other libertines should say so, is no wonder; 'tis their only refuge, or the only shadow of comfort they can promise themselves. But what I would insist upon, is, that this principle of infidelity is not to be confined to them, but does also prevail, more or less, in all who profess the gospel in general, and yet obey it but in part, or so far as it is consistent with their present pleasure, or worldly designs.

The distinguishing character of sincere christians, is, that they walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; all that by a diligent enquiry they can find to be the will of God, and their own duty: they live as men expecting, and continually preparing for a judgment to come; they observe that command of their master,

Luke  
xii. 35.

*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men, that wait for their Lord, when he will return*

return from the wedding. And our apostle, SERM.  
in this chapter speaks to the same purpose; **XVI.**  
*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for*   
*such things, be diligent, that ye may be found* Ver. 14.  
*of him in peace, without spot and blameless.*

Which implies, that all they who do in earnest expect a dissolution of the present state of things, and that they will not continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation; will consequently be diligent and watchful in preparing themselves for it. On the contrary therefore, such as do not thus prepare for the coming of Christ, and yet live and act as if they apprehended no danger, assure us more plainly than they can in words, that they flatter themselves either that he will not come at all, or at least, that he will not come to punish them in the manner he has said; *i. e.* suddenly, and as unexpected as a thief in the night. They see that the course of the world is not altered since their remembrance, but all things go on as formerly, and they suppose will continue to do so for the future: That good and bad men fare much alike, and that therefore they themselves may safely proceed, at least for some time longer, in the way they are in.

By



SERM.

XVI.

By this means, even such as profess to believe the gospel, and all things contained in it, most unreasonably support themselves, either in a total neglect of, or a partial obedience to, what it enjoins. And that the apostle did not mean by the word, *saying*, to exclude such as these, we may see by observing how that word is frequently used in scripture. For it does not always signify, what men speak with their tongues; but very often, their inward thoughts, opinion or sense of things. Thus in Job, we read of the wicked, that *they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. Not that they say so with open mouths, but by their actions shew, more certainly, that such is their mind. In like manner, such christians as walk after their own lusts, or neglect their duty, if they do not say in words, with the most profane; *Where is the promise of his coming?* they cannot but say in their hearts, with the evil servant; *My Lord delayeth his coming*; or else they could not go on as they do, but must be compelled by their own thoughts, to make a more serious and earnest preparation for it; or, to perfect their holiness in the fear of God.

Job xxi.

14.

Matt.

xxiv. 4<sup>o</sup>.

The putting off repentance to another SERM day, is a downright mockery, and contra- XVI. diction to the sudden coming of Christ; and none could be guilty of it, if he thought he should be surpris'd with it this very day or the next; nor would hypocrites so divide and parcel out their lives, and assign their pretended holiness to particular times, and at other times, be ashamed of it, if they had any real apprehensions of being taken unawares, or unprovided at any time; they would not mock God, by a bold appearance in the congregation, as true penitents, and yet steal away from the sacrament, as if they were unwilling that their repentance should be accepted through the death of Christ; or rather, as if they had a tacit resolution not to make it perfect, so as to be accepted at all. But we cannot imagine that reasonable creatures should have so little regard to their own happiness, as to act in such a manner, if their carnal hearts did not entertain some secret principle of unbelief; whereby they elude the threatnings of Christ, and all other motives to a speedy preparation for his coming. Thus the Psalmist represents these foolish people, as depending upon impunity, by a mocking  
opposi-

SERM. opposition to the declared purposes of  
 XVI. God ; *Tush, I shall never be cast down,*  
 there shall no harm happen unto me. But  
 Pf. x. 16. thirdly ;

I shall now endeavour to shew, in a few words, the great folly and danger of these men, set forth in the following part of the chapter, and other places of scripture.

How excusable soever people may be, for want of instruction, or other necessary means of coming to the knowledge of the truth ; it must be most inexcusable folly and wickedness for any one to turn away his eyes from those means when laid before him ; as if he hated the truth, and was afraid of being set right, in a matter of so great, or rather infinite concern. But so 'tis, these foolish people act ; the words following my text, tell us, they are willingly, or wilfully ignorant ; wilfully ignorant of those things, which should convince them of the certainty of a sudden destruction, which will come upon them unawares, and baffle all their vain hopes of security or escape. They will not call to mind nor duly consider that example of the patience of God, which waited long in the days of Noah ; and that the foolish people there-  
 fore

fore despised all the warnings of that SERM.  
 preacher of righteousness. But the truth XVI.  
 of God's threatning was nevertheless fully  
 manifested in its due time, by the flood  
 which was brought upon the world of the  
 ungodly; so that they perished unexpect-  
 edly in their folly and unbelief.

For the same invincible folly and obsti-  
 nacy in sin, and in the same sudden and  
 surprizing manner, God *turned the cities* 2 Pet. ii.  
*of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, and con-* 6.  
*demned them with an overthrow, making them*  
*an ensample unto those that after should live*  
*ungodly.* And such examples indeed are  
 very proper to remind us, that the threat-  
 nings of God are not the less certain for  
 their being delayed; but will fall the hea-  
 vyer, and be more severe, the longer the  
 sinner has provoked his vengeance, by  
 despising all his warnings and instruction.

But while men walk after their lusts, no  
 warnings or examples have any force; they  
 are then such fools as hate knowledge, and  
 set at nought all God's counsel and re-  
 proof. They act in direct opposition to  
 his most gracious and merciful designs, in  
 waiting long for their repentance; for, as  
 the Preacher observes, *because sentence against* Ecccl. viii.  
*an evil work is not executed speedily, there-* 27.



SERM. *fore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in*  
 XVI. *them to do evil.* And as the house of Israel

*saith of the prophet Ezekiel; The vision that*  
 Ezek. xii. *he seeth, is for many days to come, and he*  
 27. *prophecieth of the times that are far off; so*

*these christians think of their master's coming, as if it was at a long day, or never to come at all. But if he certainly will come, and that quickly, as he has said, no length of time can excuse their folly and wickedness, nor consequently abate their punishment. For, to this purpose, the apostle puts us in mind, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Not as if there was no difference of time with God, but that a thousand years, or any longer duration can have no more force than a single day, either to stop his hand, or alter his purpose; or to make his threatnings less certain, or the sinner's punishment less unavoidable. He delays, we are told, because he is long suffering to us toward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, as the apostle goes on to tell us; and then, the longest duration of time past, can be of no signification to those fools, who are thus*

2 Pet. iii.

9.

Ver. 10.

thus taken, but only to enhance their folly SERM.  
and ingratitude, and to convince them of XVI.  
it, when it is too late.

It cannot be denied but that many hundred years have past, since that promise of Christ; *Behold, I come quickly, and my* Rev. xxiii. 12.  
*reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* And, as far as we know, many hundred more may pass, before his coming to a general judgment. And hence it is, that the rewards and punishments of another life seem, to inconsiderate men, to be at a distance, and hardly worth their present attention, when they have so many other things so near at hand, to take up not only their time, but their whole heart and affections. But since no term of years can make any alteration in the purposes of God, as it does among men; every wise man will look upon them to be as certain as if they were already fulfilled: and when once time has brought them to pass, every man unprovided will acknowledge that they came too quick for him.

But what we ought most of all to consider is this; that if none of us should be surprized by the day of judgment in this life, yet we certainly know that we must

SERM. die; and every one's death is the end of  
XVI. the world to that particular man. His

time of trial is then over; his day of grace is past, and his condition determined and unalterable. The uncertainty too of this time is well known, and the many sad examples of people unexpectedly taken out of the world, which are continually before our eyes, must argue that the folly of every negligent sinner, who cannot or will not see his danger, is greater than words can express. *Tbou fool! this night, or this very hour, thy soul may be required*

Jam. v. 9. *of thee. Behold, says St. James, the judge*

Rev. ii. 16. *standeth before the door. Repent, says Christ, or I will come unto thee quickly.* The design of God in giving us such warning, is, that we may live in a settled course of righteousness, in expectation of the coming of our Lord; and therefore, to think to escape by any other means, is endeavouring to mock God, and elude his purposes. The trifling sinner, who pretends to holiness at particular times, may imagine that he has at least, a chance to be taken at a time not unprepared. But this is a vain imagination, and as senseless as it is wicked. For although time and chance happeneth to all men, yet it does

not

*are scoffers at religion:*

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not to Him, with whom we have to do ; **SERM.**  
but all things are naked and open before **XVI.**  
Him. He cannot but be acquainted with  
every interval of every man's time, so as  
to know, how to come when he is least  
expected. And this He assures us He will  
do. *If thou shalt not watch, I will come on* **Rev. iii. 3.**  
*thee as a thief ; and thou shalt not know what*  
*hour I will come upon thee.*

*Be not therefore deceived, since God is not*  
*or cannot be mocked ; but whatsoever a man* **Gal. vi. 7.**  
*soweth, that shall he also reap :* In spite of  
any flattering devices of his own heart, he  
shall surely be rewarded according to his  
works. I conclude with the advice and  
warning of the son of Sirach: *Make no* **Eccles:**  
*tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off* **v. 7.**  
*from day to day : for suddenly shall the wrath*  
*of the Lord come forth, and in thy security*  
*thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the day*  
*of vengeance.*

F I N I S



not to him, with whom we have to do; *Serm.*  
 but all things are naked and open before *XVI.*  
 him. He cannot but be acquainted with  
 every interval of every man's time, so as  
 to know how to come when he is least  
 expected. And this He assures us He will  
 do. If then thou hast not watch, I will come on thee in  
 that thou art asleep; and then thou shalt not know what  
 hour I will come upon thee.

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that God is not  
 or cannot be known by the senses, but only by the light of  
 inward, that is, by the inward light of  
 any flattering hope, or by any outward  
 shall truly be known to his  
 works. I conclude with the advice and  
 warning of the Lord of *Simeon*: Make no  
 attempt to know the Lord, and put not off  
 your day to day; for suddenly shall the reward  
 of the Lord come forth, and in the security  
 of the heart be hid, and pass in the day  
 of vengeance.



